

**‘The Scholar’s Copy Book’ and the ‘Blotting-Book
Mind’:**

**Stratigraphic Approaches to Interdisciplinary
Reading and Writing in the Work of Vernon Lee**

By Sally Blackburn-Daniels

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Abstract:

This project examines Vernon Lee’s (1856-1935) assimilation of contemporary models of scientific theory into her own textual output. It does so by bringing attention to Lee’s writing practice as a development of her own understanding of the scientific theory of the mneme, and furthermore, the way in which this understanding then became a framework for her investigation of the mechanisms of textual allusion.

The Vernon Lee archive at the British Institute of Florence holds over four-hundred and twenty works previously owned and read by Lee, many of which carry her annotations. These holdings are predominantly scientific works, and provide a bibliographic key to unlocking the references within Lee’s essays, novels, novellas and short stories. This thesis utilizes these texts, and Lee’s marginalia therein, to consider a) the ways in which Lee embraces and embeds scientific discourse within her work, b) her recognition of the evolution of scientific fields and the continuing presence of superseded theories, and c) the ways in which scientific discourse and praxis becomes stratified within Lee’s reading. I argue that Lee’s approach to scientific progression echoes her textual practice: one that charts the succession and development of a discipline in temporal layers within her own works, or in the construction of a hybrid theorem from a multiplicity of theories within a single or across disciplinary boundaries.

The advancement of this practice is, I suggest, shaped by two subtly different paradigms, the ‘scholar’s copy book’, and the ‘blotting-book mind’. Each of these metaphors are textual in nature, but they exhibit two distinct approaches to memory: from a train of thought or chronologically ordered stratigraphic approach—as in the case of the scholar’s book—to the presence of recollections from multiple layers of memory in synchronicity—as in the blotting-book mind. By unpicking the threads of association

and textual fragments extant within Lee's work, I suggest that Lee's writing is in fact a negotiation between these two models.

The disciplines selected for consideration embody different facets of the stratigraphic model: the first chapter engages with Richard Semon's idea of mnemonic storage, and Semon's theory as an insight into Lee's writing practice. Archaeological and geological strata become the physical site for mnemonic storage and recall in Chapter II, whilst the genealogical strata of the family tree are examined in Chapter III, with considerations of both Lee's personal family lineage, and the mono- or polygenic evolutionary origin and development of humanity. Chapter IV examines the way a framework of strata is used to render the surface of the face and coinciding substrata of psychological traits as a basis for understanding Lee's interest in, and refutation of, physiognomy. Chapter V focuses on the biological inheritance of physical and psychological traits, and finally, Chapter VI examines the stratified consciousness and the excavation thereof in psychoanalysis.

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
A Note on Primary Resources	2
Introduction	12
 Chapter I Richard Semon, Mnemic Psychology and the Microtome	29
 Chapter II Vernon Lee and the Earth Sciences	56
 Chapter III Anthropology and the War Dance	87
 Chapter IV The Maniac Frown and a Schone Seele	126
 Chapter V Malthusianism to Meliorism: Lee, Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter	156
 Chapter VI Mediating a Male Malady	179
 Conclusion	214
 Afterword	218
 Appendix	219
 Bibliography	252

My mind seems like an old blotting-book, full of fragments of sentences, of words
suggesting something, which refuses to absorb any more ink.

Vernon Lee, *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906)

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A Note on Primary Resources

Lee scholarship benefits from three considerable archives, with the foremost being the Vernon Lee Papers at Colby College, Maine. This collection was presented to the College in 1951 by Irene Cooper Willis and contains over 1000 of Lee's letters home, 136 manuscripts and articles, photographs, personal documents and artefacts. Willis's gift of Vernon Lee's letters, manuscripts and other miscellaneous ephemera to the Colby College has provided scholars in Lee studies with an enormously important resource. The holdings are now freely accessible, and many of the letters are now being digitized.¹

A further deposit of correspondence is held by Somerville College Archives, Oxford, and contains over 2,700 letters to Lee, from over 350 correspondents. These letters were carefully curated by Lee in her lifetime and donated to Somerville in 1935. These include letters from correspondents such as Maurice Baring, Bella Duffy, Patrick Geddes, Mary Robinson, Daniel Halevy, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Mario Praz, Logan Pearsall Smith, Richard Semon, H. G. Wells and Edith Wharton.

Lee's personal library from her home the Villa il Palmerino, is now held at the Harold Acton Library at the British Institute of Florence. The Vernon Lee Collection contains over 400 works and was presented to the Institute by Willis after Lee's death in 1935. The collection represents Lee's wide-ranging interest in the sciences, social sciences and the humanities, and many of the books have been copiously annotated. This is by no means the sum of Lee's reading in its entirety; other works with Lee's marginalia have recently come up for sale, including an edition of H. G. Wells's *The Passionate Friend. A Novel* (1913) inscribed 'To Vernon Lee fr [sic] H. G. And next time I shall insist',² and Lee's copy of Edith Wharton's *The Decoration of Houses* (1897) inscribed 'Vernon Lee from Edith Wharton January 1898'.³ The University of Liverpool Library Special Collections also holds Lee's copy of H. B. Brewster's *The Statuette and the Background* (1896) which has been copiously annotated by Lee.⁴ We can also of course glean Lee's reading habits from her correspondence, quotations and mentions of books within texts, and also from her

¹ *The Vernon Lee Collection at Colby Digital* (2016), <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/vernonlee/> [Accessed March 2018].

² This edition of Wells is listed under the seller Peter Harrington, London, for £875. <https://www.peterharrington.co.uk/search/?q=h%20g%20wells> [Accessed April 28, 2018].

³ Wharton's work is also listed by Peter Harrington, at £5,000. <http://www.peterharrington.co.uk/the-decoration-of-houses.html> [accessed April 28, 2018].

⁴ H. B. Brewster, *The Statuette and the Background* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1896). University of Liverpool Library, Special Collections SPEC ZANIA.E.5.

reading notebooks held at Colby College Archives. An additional resource which includes further transcriptions of marginalia, copy books and correspondence in relation to Lee and her reading is the R.E.D. (the Reading Experience Database), directed by the Lee scholar Shafquat Towheed.⁵ I draw on all of these primary sources in the present thesis.

⁵ Anon, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading> [accessed April 28, 2018].

Introduction

[R]ace is nothing and language is all; for the blood carries only physical resemblance, which is simple and individual; while the word carries thought, custom, law and prejudice, which are complex and universal.¹

-Vernon Lee, *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (1907)

Scholarship focusing on the critical response to Lee by her contemporaries often emphasizes a schism between Lee and key figures in the modernist movement. This supposition of a literary opposition is reductive and fails to take into consideration the extensive networks in which Lee moved, and the reciprocity of influences between Lee and the next generation of modernist writers. Angela Leighton's 'Vernon Lee's Ghostly Aesthetics' (2007) goes some way to addressing this by providing a sketch of Lee's critical reception during the final years of her life, yet still suggests that it was Lee's 'misfortune' to live long enough to see the new literary generation deem the Victorians (of which she is assumed to be one) as irrelevant.² Virginia Woolf's infamous letter to Violet Dickenson is often used as evidence of this literary estrangement, with Woolf claiming she is 'sobbing with misery over Vernon Lee, who really turns all good writing to vapour, with her fluency and insipidity'.³ Catherine Anne Wiley also comments on Lee's contemporary critical reception when noting Woolf's fear of becoming 'slack and untidy' like Lee, and reveals Wyndham Lewis's suggestion that to read Vernon Lee is 'like watching a person of some intelligence administering electric shocks to herself'.⁴ And of course, no mauling by the modernists would be complete without a few scratches from T. S. Eliot, whose draft of 'The Waste Land' included a dig at Lee's aesthetic sensibility:

Fresca was baptized in a soapy sea
Of Symonds—Walter Pater—Vernon Lee.⁵

¹ Vernon Lee *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1907), p. 154.

² Angela Leighton, 'Seeing Nothing: Vernon Lee's Ghostly Aesthetics', in *On Form, Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 99-124 (p. 100).

³ Virginia Woolf, to Violet Dickenson, December 1907, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Volume I, eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 320.

⁴ Catherine Anne Wiley, "'Warming Me Like a Cordial': The Ethos of the Body in Vernon Lee's Aesthetics", in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, eds. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 58-74 (p. 58).

⁵ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London, Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 26.

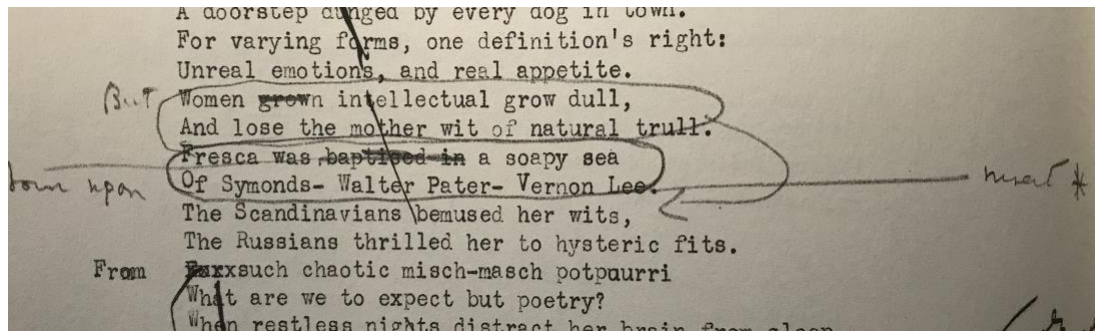


Figure 1. Facsimile of T. S. Eliot's manuscript for *The Waste Land*.

Lee's modernist reception, Leighton argues, was clouded by a perceived Victorianism in her work, which belied her inventiveness of form and literary avant-garde techniques.⁶ And Lee's personal feeling of being maligned by contemporary literary celebrities, Leighton suggests, is no reflection on both the numbers of eminent Victorians and modernists that made up a percentage of her readership. Indeed, Virginia and Leonard Woolf published Lee's *The Poet's Eye: Notes on Some Differences Between Verse and Prose* at the Hogarth Press in 1926 (nineteen years after noting her insipidity), and Roger Fry wrote to Lee in praise of her work *Music and Its Lovers* (1933).⁷

After Lee's death in Italy (1935), her executrix Irene Cooper Willis sought to issue a private collection of extracts from Lee's correspondence. *Vernon Lee's Letters, with a Preface by her Executor I. C. Willis* was published in 1937 with a limited run of fifty copies. Lee had made explicit her wish that these letters remain unread until 1980 perhaps due to being outlived by some of her correspondents, and this project was, in essence, counter to those wishes. Willis felt vindicated because the work was only to be entrusted to those who had a personal relationship with Lee.⁸ Lee's effects, of which Willis was the sole heir, remained with her in London up until her transfer of them to Colby College, Maine in 1951. Willis chose Colby because of her admiration for curator and Hardy scholar Carl J. Weber, and because she was also deeply concerned that another war could endanger the material if it remained in England.⁹ It was shortly after this transition of materials that critical interest in Lee began to grow.

⁶ Leighton, p. 99.

⁷ Vernon Lee, *The Poet's Eye: Notes on Some Differences Between Verse and Prose* (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at The Hogarth Press, 1926).

⁸ Vernon Lee, *Vernon Lee's Letters with a Preface by her Executor I. C. Willis*, ed. Irene Cooper Willis, (London: Privately Printed, 1937). British Library, CUP.500. l. 22.

⁹ Anon. 'Irene Cooper Willis (Donor)', *History of Special Collections @ Colby* (2018), <http://web.colby.edu/csc-history-of/the-people/highlighted-donors/i-c-willis-donor/> [accessed June 15, 2018].

To mark the gift of Lee's papers, a special edition of the *Colby Quarterly* (1952) was published, with librarian Elizabeth F. Libbey's acknowledgement. 'The Vernon Lee Papers' briefly documents the collection (private papers and correspondence of Lee and Eugene, books and manuscripts, biographical notes and miscellaneous memorabilia),¹⁰ and provides a copy of Willis's letter of gift which states at Lee's request 'the original packets of her Letters Home [...] shall not be read except privately until 1980 and that all examination of them shall be subject to this restriction'.¹¹ Libbey adds that a Harvard student has already been granted permission to use these papers for a dissertation.¹² This student was Burdett Gardner, who also in the same edition of *Colby Quarterly* asked 'Who Was Vernon Lee?' (1952). Whilst providing a sketchy overview of Lee's literary works, he argues that the restriction is an attempt to keep all facts about her private life from the public.¹³ Leighton's comment that Lee had the misfortune to outlive her contemporaries appears ill conceived: Lee was well connected and corresponded up until her final days in 1935.

Gardner's short essay is followed by 'An Interim Bibliography of Vernon Lee', and three articles from Colby College's Carl J. Weber: 'A List of Those Who Wrote to Lee', 'Mr Wells and Vernon Lee', 'The Date of Miss Jewett's Letter to Vernon Lee', and 'Letters from Gosse and Benson'.¹⁴ The bequest and subsequent publication of this *Colby Quarterly* appeared to pique the interest of mid-century scholars. Burdett Gardner's doctoral thesis, entitled *The Lesbian Imagination (Victorian Style): A Psychological and Critical Study of 'Vernon Lee'* was completed at Harvard in 1954. This remained unpublished until 1987, thanks to the embargo. Some reprinted editions and anthologies followed this renewed interest in Lee scholarship in the mid-50s, with one of the first being Horace Gregory's 1954 edition of *The Snake Lady and Other Stories*, with an introduction 'The Romantic Inventions of Vernon Lee'.¹⁵

However, the most important work in the early wave of Lee scholarship was Peter Gunn's biography *Vernon Lee, Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (1964). Gunn's biographical study was published twenty-six years before the end-date of Lee's embargo. He addresses this issue within his preface, questioning 'for what period of time should testamentary

¹⁰ Elizabeth F. Libbey, 'The Vernon Lee Papers', *Colby Quarterly*, 3: 8 (November 1952), 1-3 (p. 1).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³ Burdett Gardner, 'Who Was Vernon Lee?', *Colby Quarterly*, 3: 8 (November 1952), 120-122 (p. 120).

¹⁴ Carl J. Weber, *Colby Quarterly*, 3: 8 (November 1952), 129-133, 133-134, 134-136.

¹⁵ Vernon Lee, *The Snake Lady and Other Stories*, ed. Horace Gregory (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1954); Vernon Lee, *Supernatural Tales: Excursions into Fantasy*, ed. Irene Cooper Willis (London: Peter Owen, 1955); Vernon Lee, *Pope Jacynth and More Supernatural Tales* (London: Peter Owen, 1956).

instructions bind the hands of posterity?’ Gunn argues that leaving his study on Lee until the ban was lifted would impoverish her ‘extraordinarily precocious talents’ and that after his discussion with Cooper Willis, she waived the prohibition in this instance.¹⁶ Ian Fletcher’s review of Gunn’s work in *The Modern Language Review* (1966) notes ‘Gunn’s ably written book justifies its subject’.¹⁷ But Fletcher also notes (and I believe rightly so) Gunn’s failure to tackle Lee’s role as a New Woman and particularly her same-sex relationships, which, to give credit to Gardner, he deals with head-on (this may well have been the reason it remained unpublished). What is evident is that it is her half-brother’s—Eugene Lee-Hamilton’s—work, rather than Lee’s, that resonates with Fletcher, who laments the perfunctory and patronising way in which Gunn treats his verse.¹⁸

In 1970, the prominent Lee scholar Vineta Colby published her first article on Lee’s commitment to aesthetics, and the complexity of her conception of fiction writing as the production of art. ‘The Puritan Aesthete: Vernon Lee’ began Colby’s fascination with Lee that culminated, over thirty years later, in a literary biography (2003).¹⁹ Post-1980, Colby College allowed full access to the letters which were now available for use in publication. Thereafter, Lee scholarship steadily picked up pace, beginning with a comprehensive primary bibliography collated by Phyllis F. Mannocchi; “‘Vernon Lee’: A Reintroduction and Primary Bibliography’ (1983),²⁰ and Carl Markgraf’s “‘Vernon Lee’: A Commentary and an Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Her’ (1983). Both articles were published in the same issue of *English Literature in Transition*.²¹ From this point onwards a steady stream of articles on Lee and her circle were published, and Burdett Gardner’s psychosexual biography of Lee—*The Lesbian Imagination*—eventually found a publisher. Gardner’s work contains personal anecdotes concerning Lee from (then still living) friends and acquaintances, with Gardner revelling in the details of Lee’s closest relationships and painting a portrait of a conflicted and sexually stunted subject. Gardner obviously delights in the ‘vivacious opera writer and singer Dame Ethel Smyth’s

¹⁶ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. ix-x.

¹⁷ Ian Fletcher, ‘Reviewed Works: John Addington Symonds: A Biography by Phyllis Grosskurth; *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* by Pater Gunn’, *The Modern Language Review*, 61: 1 (January 1966), 115-117 (p. 116).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117

¹⁹ Vineta Colby, ‘The Puritan Aesthete: Vernon Lee’, in *The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), pp. 235-304.

²⁰ Phyllis F. Mannocchi, “‘Vernon Lee’: A Reintroduction and Primary Bibliography’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 26: 4 (1983), 231-267.

²¹ Carl Markgraf, “‘Vernon Lee’: A Commentary and an Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Her’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 26: 4 (1983), 268-312.

[...] gossiping memoirs' concerning Lee,²² and concludes his work with reference to Lee being a spokesman 'for the cramped and cabined ego'.²³

Critical interest maintained a steady, if fairly unremarkable course through the remainder of the twentieth century, fuelled by feminist readers' reclamation of non-canonical women writers and their networks.²⁴ However, 2003 saw a significant upswing of interest. In June 2003, Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham staged the conference 'Vernon Lee: Literary Revenant' (with the title being extremely suggestive of Lee's position in literary history), and followed with an influential edited collection of essays, *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, (2006). Coincidentally, both Vineta Colby and Christa Zorn published biographies of Lee during 2003. In particular, Zorn's *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History and the Victorian Female Intellectual*, which originated as a doctoral thesis, worked Lee into the gap in fin de siècle scholarship on women writers.²⁵ In 2006, a conference was hosted at Villa il Palmerino to mark the seventieth year after Lee's death: *Dalla Stanza Accanto; Vernon Lee e Firenze settant' anni dopo*, with organizers Serena Cenni and Elisa Bizzotto editing selected papers for publication that year.²⁶ This event was followed by conferences *Violet del Palmerino* (2012), and *Les femmes et la pensée politique: Vernon Lee et les Cercles Radicaux* (2013). It was during the 2013 symposium that the International Vernon Lee Society was formed.

During the last five years (2013-2018) interest in Lee has blossomed and become conspicuously cross-discipline and multi-form. Art Historian Francesco Ventrella is currently working on Vernon Lee's queer formalism and the empathy of sculpture, whilst philosopher Derek Matraver's work on *Empathy* engages with Lee's *einfihlung*.²⁷ Classicist Dylan Kenny provides a foreword to Jeff Nagy's translation of Lee's *Psychology of an Art*

²² Burdett Gardner, *The Lesbian Imagination (Victorian Style): A Psychological and Critical Study of Vernon Lee* (New York, NY, and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), p. 69.

²³ Ibid., p. 536.

²⁴ For example: Ruth Robbins, 'Vernon Lee: Decadent Woman?', in *Fin de Siècle/ Fin du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1992), pp. 139-161; Jane Hotchkiss, '[P]revising Freud: Vernon Lee's Castration Phantasy', in *Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature*, eds. C. M. Kaplan and A. B. Simpson (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 21-38; Gillian Beer, 'The Dissidence of Vernon Lee: *Satan the Waster* and the Will to Believe', in *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 107-131; Wendy Gan, 'A Return to the Imaginary: Psychoanalysis and Travel in Vernon Lee's Travel Essays', *Prose Studies*, 22: 3 (1999), 79-70.

²⁵ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, MA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), and Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Ohio, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. xi.

²⁶ *Dalla Stanza Accanto; Vernon Lee e Firenze settant' anni dopo* ed. Serena Cenni e Elisa Bizzotto (Firenze: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 2006).

²⁷ Derek Matravers, *Empathy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), pp. 124-125.

Writer.²⁸ Melissa Pritchard's novel *Palmerino* attempts to resurrect the spirit of Lee at her Italian home.²⁹ Leire Barrera Medrano's "'Dolls in Agony': Vernon Lee in Southern Spain' (2016)³⁰ considers the figure of the doll in Lee's fiction, as does Mary Clai Jones in 'Refashioning Spaces of Play in Victorian Doll Stories', both works heavily influenced and in dialogue with Patricia Pulham's *Art and the Transitional Object* (2008).³¹ Pulham's critically important monograph was one of only two that emerged from the second wave of Lee criticism during the twenty-first century, in which the Winnicottian transitional object is recast as aesthetic and playfully unstable. Sondeep Kandola's literary biography *Vernon Lee: Writers and Their Work* (2010) provides a short, but solid introduction to Lee's major works.³² Charlotte Ribeyrol's interest in chromatography is explored through the relationship of John Singer Sargent and Lee.³³ And Jane Ford's 'Greek Gift and "Given Being": The Libidinal Economies of Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales' considers the economy of the gift applying the theories of Luce Irigaray and Laura Mulvey.³⁴

Lee's library annotations have also aroused interest, most notably Pulham's previously mentioned *Art and the Transitional Object*, and Kirsty Martin's *Rhythms of Sympathy* (2013) both attentively engaging with Lee's marginalia in the field of aesthetics and psychology.³⁵ Hilary Fraser's 'Writing in the Margins and Reading Between the Lines in Vernon Lee's Library' (2006) muses on Lee's margin notes and the interstices extant between the disciplines represented on the shelves.³⁶ This is typical of the general tendency to privilege works of psychology and aesthetics in studies of Lee's reading and marginalia. Lee's own philosophy of aesthetics has, since the early 1980s, had a very significant following, with contemporary scholars focusing particularly on physiological

²⁸ Vernon Lee, *The Psychology of an Art Writer*, trans. Jeff Nagy, foreword Dylan Kenny (New York, NY: David Zwirner Books, 2018).

²⁹ Melissa Pritchard, *Palmerino* (New York: Bellvue Literary Press, 2014).

³⁰ Leire Barrera-Medrano, "'Dolls in Agony': Vernon Lee in Southern Spain', *Cahiers victoriens et édonardiens*, 83, Spring (May 31, 2016) <http://journals.openedition.org/cve/2457> [accessed June 30, 2018].

³¹ Mary Clai Jones, 'Refashioning Spaces of Play in Victorian Doll Stories', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 12: 3 (Winter 2016), <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue123/jones.htm> [accessed June 30, 2018] and Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008).

³² Sondeep Kandola, *Vernon Lee: Writers and Their Work* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2010).

³³ Charlotte Ribeyrol, *The Colours of the Past in Victorian England* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016).

³⁴ Jane Ford, 'Greek Gift and "Given Being": The Libidinal Economies of Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales' in *Economies of Desire at the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Libidinal Lives*, eds. Jane Ford, Kim Edwards Keates, and Patricia Pulham (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 106-121.

³⁵ Kirsty Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁶ Hilary Fraser, 'Writing in the Margins and Reading Between the Lines in Vernon Lee's Library', in *Dalla Stanza Accanto: Vernon Lee e Firenze settant'anni dopo*, eds. Serena Cenni e Elisa Bizzotto (Firenze: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 2006), pp. 231-241.

aesthetics.³⁷ Angela Leighton's 'Ghosts, Aestheticism and Vernon Lee' (2000) examines the intersection of art and the supernatural, gothic and the fantastic.³⁸ Joseph Bristow's 'Vernon Lee's Art of Feeling' (2006) questions the links between art and emotion and discusses Gardner's supposition that (Lee's) lesbianism was nothing more than a neurosis.³⁹ This trend is still strong in work that looks at Lee, recently including Benjamin Morgan's *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (2017).⁴⁰

A small selection of letters by Lee have been transcribed and published. These include Irene Cooper Willis' edited collection of *Vernon Lee's Letters* (1937),⁴¹ and Mandy Gagel's '1897, A Discussion of Plagiarism: Letters Between Vernon Lee, Bernard Berenson, and Mary Costelloe' (1897) which unpicks assertions of plagiarism and lost friendships.⁴² Heward Sieberg and Christa Zorn's unearthing and transcription of over 500 letters and postcards from Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse from the Forbes-Mosse estate are reproduced in *The Anglo-German Correspondence of Vernon Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse During World War I: Women Writers' Friendship Transcending Enemy Lines* (2014).⁴³ This significant collection observes how the pacifist Lee and German nationalist Forbes-Mosse maintained a friendship across borders. Most recently, Amanda Gagel and Sophie Geoffroy's edited *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee, 1856-1935: Volume I, 1856-1884* was published in 2017. Whilst these selections of letters provide a suitable introduction to Lee's vast network of correspondents, they are necessarily limited. Much of this thesis utilizes the (still very many) unpublished Lee letters.

Gillian Beer's work 'The Dissidence of Vernon Lee: *Satan the Waster* and the Will to Believe' was one of the first major studies to engage critically with Lee's marginalia, but with a focus primarily on psychology and ethics. Beer draws on Lee's notes within the works of Caroline Playne—*Neuroses of the Nations* (1925) and *The Pre-War Mind in Britain* (1928)—Wilfred Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916), Wilhelm

³⁷ Vernon Lee, *Beauty and Ugliness: And Other Studies in Physiological Aesthetics* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912).

³⁸ Angela Leighton, 'Ghosts, Aestheticism and "Vernon Lee"', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 281 (2000), 1-14.

³⁹ Joseph Bristow, 'Vernon Lee's Art of Feeling', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 25, 1 (Spring 2006), 117-139.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁴¹ *Vernon Lee's Letters with a Preface by her Executor Irene Cooper Willis*, ed. Irene Cooper Willis (London: Privately Printed, 1937). British Library, CUP.500.1.22.

⁴² Mandy Gagel, '1897, A Discussion of Plagiarism: Letters Between Vernon Lee, Bernard Berenson, and Mary Costelloe', *Literary Imagination*, 12: 2 (2010), 154-179.

⁴³ *The Anglo-German Correspondence of Vernon Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse During World War I: Women Writers' Friendship Transcending Enemy Lines*, eds. Heward Sieberg and Christa Zorn (Lewiston, NY. & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2014).

Wundt's *Grundriss der Psychologie* (1909) and Charles Roden Buxton's *Towards a Lasting Settlement* (1915) to name a few.⁴⁴ Beer's work prompted Shafquat Towheed to explore the archive.⁴⁵ Towheed's excellent consideration of Lee's evolutionary reading—"The Creative Evolution of Scientific Paradigms: Vernon Lee and the Debate over the Hereditary Transmission of Acquired Characters"—has set the tone for this much wider study of Lee's scientific influences.⁴⁶

As I have shown with this consideration of Lee scholarship, significant studies of Lee's aesthetics, pacifism, cosmopolitanism, her support of women's rights, and her position on the peripheries of Decadence, have been produced, yet the thread that weaves these seemingly disparate movements together—Lee's reading in the sciences, and her correspondence and dialogue with scientific individuals—is severely under-represented. In this sense, the current field in Lee studies is a hospitable place in which to situate my project, which emphasizes the ways in which her own scientific reading, and her friendships with key people in the field informed not only her textual output, but her textual practice. In considering Lee's lesser studied works, unpublished essays, and unpublished letters in relationship to her reading in the sciences, this thesis provides an original praxis for study of Lee. Alongside the publication of over forty essay collections, short stories, and novels, Vernon Lee also penned a large number of published articles for journals and newspapers. Her career spanned her entire adult life—from 'Les Aventures d'une pièce de monnaie' in 1870, to *Music and Its Lovers* in 1933—and Lee often wrote to the point of cramp and exhaustion, yet she did so, she argued, only to 'please herself'.⁴⁷ Her bibliography contains works on art history, aesthetics, music, travel writing, supernatural stories, fantastic tales, imaginary portraits *à la* Pater, political commentary, women's rights, anti-vivisection, and pacifism. This output is shaped by the eclectic nature and volume of Lee's reading, an aspect of her practice alluded to in her work *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Theory* (1923). Here she brings together for publication essays and notes on the literary arts and her theory of writing. Of the ten chapters, two are dedicated to Lee's personal analysis of famous works: 'Studies in Literary Psychology' contemplates the 'The Syntax of De Quincey', 'The Rhetoric of Landor' and Carlyle's use of the 'Present Tense'. Chapter VI—"The Handling

⁴⁴ Beer, "The Dissidence of Vernon Lee: *Satan the Waster* and the Will to Believe".

⁴⁵ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, third edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴⁶ Shafquat Towheed, 'The Creative Evolution of Scientific Paradigms: Vernon Lee and the Debate over the Hereditary Transmission of Acquired Characters', *Victorian Studies*, 46: 1 (Autumn 2006), 33-61.

⁴⁷ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 161.

of Words’—takes 500 word sections from novels and scrutinizes the nouns, pronouns, verbs, verbal participles, adjectives and adjectival participles, thereof. Through this form of close reading, she recognizes that

the efficacy of all writing depends not more on the Writer than on the Reader, without whose active response, whose output of experience, feeling and imagination, the living phenomenon, the only reality, of Literary Art cannot take place.⁴⁸

Lee’s key point is that the Reader is active in constructing the meaning of the text, and does so in a way that impacts upon the text more effectively than the Writer. This is due to the Writer only playing their part by ‘manipulating the contents of his Reader’s mind’, manipulating not only ‘single impressions, single ideas and emotions’ but also ‘moods and trains of thought’ that are latent within the Reader.⁴⁹ Yet for the Writer to understand this, as Lee does, the Writer must recognize the impact of reading upon themselves. In this sense, I would like to argue, Lee anticipates intertextuality. There is a *co-presence* between the Writer and the Reader and the text is shaped by both. The Writer provides a stimulus, a departure point; but the destination of the Reader’s train of thought is unknown. William James in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) uses the phrase ‘train of thought’, in his discussion of ‘the stream of thought’, or what came to be known as in modernist circles as the ‘stream of consciousness’.⁵⁰ The stream is described (by Bain, and quoted by James in *The Principles*) as ‘not a continuous current, but a series of distinct ideas, more or less rapid in their succession’.⁵¹ Lee was heavily influenced by psychological theory, and *The Handling of Words* is no exception. Yet where James’s train or stream of thought is a series of associations, Lee’s ‘Association of Ideas’ is concomitant and synchronous: so that the various items united in our real experience tend to awaken simultaneously, rather than in succession. Lee writes in ‘The Nature of the Writer’:

Each Reader, while receiving from the Writer, is in reality reabsorbing into his life, where it refreshes or poisons him, a residue of his own living; but melted into absorbable subtleness, combined and stirred into a new kind of efficacy by the choice of the Writer. Again: round every suggestion of the book there gathers a halo of vague *something else*; and besides the succession, or more properly, a simultaneous *continuum* in which it all takes place. Thus the Reader’s own experience, moving beneath the pressure of the word, brings into consciousness how many

⁴⁸ Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923), pp. vii-viii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁰ William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Volume I (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1890), p. 227.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

sights, how many feelings of which the author of that word can have no notion.⁵²

The text—the collection of words chosen by the writer—is surrounded by an aura, a vague *halo* (an important term), of which the author has no notion. This amorphous collection of the reader's past experience, sights and feelings is the reader's memory: individual, and unidentifiable by the writer. Lee continues:

I have tried to show that the action of literature is different from that of real life, because the written word acts on the plane not of direct experience but of *memory*. Now the ways of *memory* are special to itself, and so, in a manner, is *memory's* logic. For *memory* means experience submitted to the disintegration, the elimination and addition, the chemistry, so to speak, of our whole human organism, and of the accumulated items of experience which it has previously altered and integrated in the mind. *Memory* is not storage but a selection; and the fact of recollection implies already a certain suitability to our character and habits. *Memory* is not a helter-skelter gathering together, since everything new becomes at once connected by similarity or significance with something old. In *memory*, therefore, the items of experience, thus diminished, enlarged, fused, come to exist in different dimensions, to move with different weight and pace, obeying no longer the rhythm of the outside world, but that of our inner one, and taking their meaning and power not from an alien universe, but from the individual human soul.⁵³

The process that enables the action of literature, of writing and of reading, is memory. Every experience is subject to processes within the memory, such as disintegration, integration, elimination, addition, but most importantly, memory 'is not storage but a selection'. This is not a suggestion by Lee that memories are consciously arranged and stored according to personal choices, but that the action of the memory is selective, and the action of the memory links new experiences with old in interesting and complex ways. Lee's recognition of this act of storage and retrieval, and its utilization within her own writing practice is unusual because of the ways in which it counter-intuitively brings together recognition and de-familiarization; historic and contemporaneous events explicitly treated as simultaneous.

Catherine Maxwell's article 'Vernon Lee's Handling of Words' (2018) also considers Lee's dialogic writing style—what I have termed the co-presence between writer and reader—as a natural progression from the pedagogical relationship between Lee, her mother Matilda, and her half-brother Eugene. It was Lee's literary training and

⁵² Lee, 'The Nature of the Writer', in *The Handling of Words*, pp. 79-80. Lee's Italics.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 131. My emphasis.

mentorship, often through correspondence, in her early years that became central—for Maxwell—to the way in which Lee writes.

Quick to establish a rapport, Lee is a sympathetic guide, skilfully steering her readers through arguments and expositions, stimulating and involving them through arguments and expositions, but also stimulating and involving them through impressionistic description, association, and intricate dynamic passages full of open ended verb forms.⁵⁴

Maxwell suggests that Lee guides the reader, steers her reader, stimulating, involving and allowing the reader to make associations. Lee's writing is active, it 'demonstrates an interest in active processes, experiences, and—rather than finite objects—perceptions that gradually unfold and evolve'.⁵⁵ Association is noted as beginning to play a part in Lee's work from *Juvenilia* onwards, but there is a sense that despite acknowledging the reader's constructive role, and the 'halo' of impressions surrounding the work—put in place by the reader—it is the writer's style that induces readers to 'inhabit a different mindset', 'persuading them to think and imagine in ways not naturally their own'.⁵⁶

Whilst my own project is a similar consideration of the dialogic relationship between Writer and Reader, it also recognizes the freedom outside of Lee's literary and stylistic 'directions' for the Reader to make connections and associations individual to the reader, using theories of memory as a framework. Maxwell's essay draws attention to concepts of association in general terms, but does not explicitly refer to memory, the theories and constructions of which I consider to be integral to understanding Lee's texts. Significantly, Maxwell also suggests that the Writer fully shapes the Reader's response to the text.⁵⁷ I would argue that in fact the reverse is true: that Lee understands the impossibility of this form of control, and furthermore, encourages this freedom on behalf of the Reader. If we refer back to the quotation above, from *The Handling of Words*, Lee utilizes the term memory seven times in a short extract; memory is stratified literally on the page.⁵⁸ The stratification of mnemonic triggers throughout the text, that allow an unfettered mnemonic response from the reader, aligns Lee, I would like to argue, with twentieth-century structuralist thought.

⁵⁴ Catherine Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee's Handling of Words', in *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Michael D. Hurley and Marcus Waithe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 282-297 (p. 282).

⁵⁵ Lee, *The Handling of Words*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee's Handling of Words', p. 297

⁵⁸ Lee, 'The Nature of the Writer', in *The Handling of Words*, pp. 79-80.

Julia Kristeva's (1941-) essay 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' (1966) famously re-introduced the Bakhtinian concepts of *intertextuality*, and *dialogism*: a 'play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee'.⁵⁹ This structuralist theory was further expanded by Gerard Genette, who provided a praxis for the navigation of transcendent textualities; exploring the 'relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts [...] the actual presence of one text within another'.⁶⁰ For structuralists, the text is no longer a totality but a fibre in the web of a writer's wider influence. Genette's transcendent textuality unravels the influences that implicitly or explicitly reveal themselves within the textual whole, widening the study of the text to include co-present texts and illusions (*intertextuality*), liminal works (*epitexts and peritexts*), commentary (*metatextuality*), the palimpsest—superimposition of a text (*hypertextuality*), and textual convention (*architextuality*).⁶¹ *The Handling of Words* recognizes this dialogism between the author/ Writer (text of the subject) and the Reader (text of the addressee), arguing that '[w]hatever we may be doing, so long as we are writing, we are manipulating the consciousness of the Reader'.⁶² This dialogism is explored by Lee in her opening to *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906)—a collection of her own journal entries—with a statement that recognizes the complexity of recall:

Strange that in the confusion of impressions, not new mainly, but oddly revived (the same things transposed by time into new keys), my most vivid impression should be of something so impersonal, so unimportant, as an antique sarcophagus serving as base to a medieval tomb. Impressions? Scarcely. *My mind seems like an old blotting-book, full of fragments of sentences, of words suggesting something, which refuses to absorb any more ink.*⁶³

The sarcophagus base to the medieval tomb is the stimulus which produces the retrieval or revival of the previously stored memory-images—impressions—from multiple chronological strata of engrams and engram-complexes in the mnemonic substance. Lee's confusion of impressions is fluid and fragmentary, the superposition of multiple memories produces a homophonic response, which is represented by the metaphor of the blotting-book. In this way, the stratified structure of mnemonic recall does not only parallel geological strata in structure but also in performance—the geological record is

⁵⁹ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), pp. 34-61 (p. 34).

⁶⁰ Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

⁶¹ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, ed. Richard Macksey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. xviii-xix.

⁶² Lee, *The Handling of Words*, p. 63.

⁶³ Vernon Lee, *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1906), p. 11. My emphasis.

not complete—the archaeologist does not recover a culture in its entirety from the chosen stratum, no more than can an individual recall every sensory input in a chronological period. They share strata and fragments. The archaeologist reads/interprets the strata and the fragments to create a narrative of the historic epoch represented. The mnemonic fragments are recalled by a similar sensory input recognition in fragments and memory. The blotting-book as a conceptual framework for memory is crucial: the blotting-book would ordinarily be used multiple times for the removal of excess ink from the copy beneath. The script imprinted on the page is uncontrolled by the writer, the text copied from areas of pooling ink on the pages surface. The blotting sheet may remove the excess from one page multiple times, or be used multiple times for concurrent or disparate pieces of text. Each layer would no longer be discernible from the next. There would be partial and fragmentary remains of the perfect blotted copy.

However, twenty-six years earlier, Lee's work *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (1880) was also interested in concepts of memory, but this time, through the 'scholar's copy book'.⁶⁴

This volume BELCARO is the first fruit of these attempts at knowing: it is not the Sir-Oracle manual of a professor, with all in its right place, understood or misunderstood, truth and error all neatly systematized for the teaching of others; *but rather the scholar's copy book, the fragmentary and somewhat helter-skelter notes of what, in his listenings and questionings, he has been able to understand*, and which he hands over to his fellow-pupils, who may have understood different portions or in different ways. Such a collection of notes this volume most un-metaphorically is: it is literally a selection of such pages out of my commonplace books.⁶⁵

Once more, this book is fragmentary, and once more an object to be shared. There is a perfect copy—the Sir-Oracle *manual* of a professor—then Lee's copy or commonplace books, and then finally the fellow pupils. That Lee calls Sir-Oracle a manual suggests this learning stems from textual origins. Lee then mediates, transposes (but not perfectly) to her scholar's copy book, which is then read and interpreted. Lee continues:

And just because it is what it is, because it is not a mere piece of work, not a mere something made by me and thrust away, in its systematic cut and dryness, from my living personality; but a certain proportion of my growing, altering, enlarging, disjointed, helter-skelter of thoughts, of the thoughts that come to me whether I will or not.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Vernon Lee, *Belcaro Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: W. Satchell and Co., 1880), p. 6. My emphasis.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

But whereas the blotting-book mind is palimpsestic, layered, an intertext, *Belcaro's* copy-book is a 'helter-skelter of thoughts', 'helter-skelter notes', a two-dimensional train of thought, rather than the web of connections.

Lee deploys the terms the 'scholar's copy book' and the 'blotting-book mind' to represent the contents of the Writer and Reader's mnemonic facility. Both examples are textual metaphors: both the copy book and blotting-book are sheets of paper, marked by script. But the storage and recall of the scholar's copy book and the blotting-book mind are essentially very different. This thesis asks how the models of memory and writing practice evident in *Belcaro* and *The Spirit of Rome* are useful to reading Lee's work and her intertextual relationships. How did this affect the way in which she pieced together read information? And how did this affect the way in which she wrote for her audience? Both these metaphors stratify the text differently, and they provide clues about the ways in which Lee thinks about textual connections and remnants. They suggest that the manifestation of these intertextual fragments reveal Lee's read and written remains, and the different ways in which she conceptualized the workings of these relationships. Furthermore, they suggest that Lee was intensely conscious of this process, conscious of the reader's part within this process, and recognized the lack of control she had over the palette with which she was to paint her own texts.

In unpicking the threads of association and textual fragments extant within Lee's work, the objective of this thesis is to posit the importance of and the implicit inclusion of scientific allusion and discourse to the theories and practise of intertextual writing and reading. Beneath the surface layer of each of Vernon Lee's texts lie a complex and stratigraphic framework dealing with a variety of modes of thought spanning the scientific, aesthetic and historical discourses in which Lee was entrenched. Through consideration of her reading, marginalia, and correspondence, each volume becomes a physical representation of Lee's stratified consciousness, in which layers of space and time coexist. These dialogic traces are fragments of textual memories embodied within and upon the read page.

Lee's library at the Harold Acton Library is the point of origin for this examination. My own interest in the library collection as a textual consciousness stems from Lee's own writings, which frequently turn to the archive as a source of inspiration. Patricia Pulham's 'Duality and Desire in Louis Norbert' (2006) brings into focus the importance of archival remains for Lee's characters Lady Venetia, the Archaeologist,

Louis Norbert and Artemisia.⁶⁷ As Lady Venetia and the Archaeologist attempt to recover the lives of Louis Norbert and Artemisia from historical obscurity, it is the archive that provides documentation of their liaison, albeit in a coded fashion. Pulham also draws on Lee's *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880) as an example of Lee's specific interest in the fortification of biography 'with diligent research in documents of the past'.⁶⁸ *Ottolie's* narrator plots the piecing together of Christopher Reinhart's life through evidence in his 'books, some unfinished stories and poems, and a MS'.⁶⁹ Lee's intention to donate her library as a collection is of course also suggestive; they advocate for the read text as being foundational for the way in which she thinks or writes. Indeed, the trace of these thoughts—Lee's marginalia—is evident upon the page. H. J. Jackson's *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (2001) considers the transactional processes evidenced by marginalia, suggesting '[m]arking, copying out, inserting glosses, selecting heads, adding bits from other books, and writing one's own observations are all traditional devices [...] for remembering and assimilating texts'.⁷⁰ Lee's marginalia, around, on or under the words on the page, exhibit a discourse between Lee and the writer of the text. But not only this, the margins become an *aide memoire*, or an 'exogram'; an external repository for the reader's memory.⁷¹ The insides of covers become supplementary indices, and a record of the dates begun and finished. Bookmarks are improvised with stamps torn from letters and book reviews from newspapers and journals are saved between the pages of the works they critique. Infrequently, a doodle or a sketch may occur: a face partially rendered in pencil lines. On occasion, vast swathes of margin notes have been erased with only the faint indentations of the pencil marks remaining (Lee very rarely made notations in anything other than pencil, for an example of this anomaly see Figure 2). This thesis attempts to make use of these markings in an attempt to piece together works that a) provide an insight into the discipline of interest and b) show a progression or stratification of intellectual thought that could then be examined in Lee's literary works. The project also requires extensive use of correspondence—which in itself

⁶⁷ Patricia Pulham. 'Duality and Desire in *Louis Norbert*', in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics* eds. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 123-142 (p. 124).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶⁹ Vernon Lee, *Ottolie: An Eighteenth Century Idyll* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1883), p. 24.

⁷⁰ H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 87.

⁷¹ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 24.

is a temporal and spatial layering of the chains of thought that bind people together—to elucidate Lee's intellectual interests and the ways in which she used them creatively.

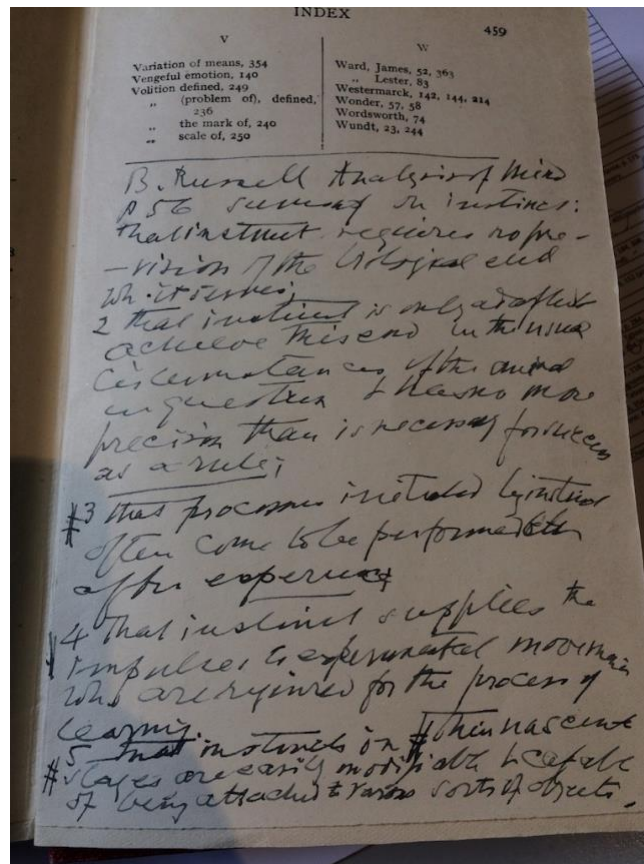


Figure 2, Photograph taken of Lee's marginalia at The British Institute of Florence.⁷²

⁷² William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1921), p. 459. Harold Acton Archive VL 302 MCD.

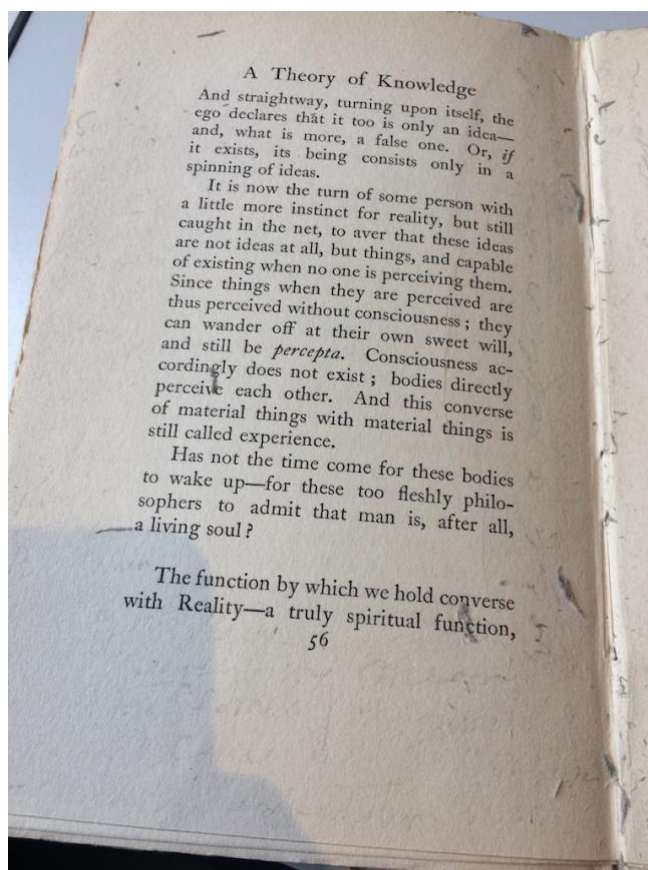


Figure 3, Photograph taken of Lee's removal of marginalia at The British Institute of Florence.⁷³

That Lee employed herself in scientific study is evident by her textual allusions and by the discourse in the margins of her library collection. Whilst the disciplines considered may appear disparate, they are inter-woven by the threads of inheritance and memory: historical, cultural and biological. In exploring the creative use of scientific theory within Lee's works, I hope to further extend Lee scholarship into the burgeoning area of multi- and inter-disciplinary study, particularly the cross-fertilization between the literary arts and psychological and neurological sciences. Each chapter develops the concept of the trans-historic object in relation to the association of components of different strata of engrams. In this way, the reader is able to enter past and present simultaneously. Lee's explicit engagement with Semon's mnemonic works is the starting point, closely followed by the stratified archaeological dig and Lee's recall of the site. The biological and cultural inheritance of anthropology and the stratified nature of genealogy followed by physiognomy, as a superficial facial study authentic personality of the

⁷³ Charles Augustus Strong, *A Theory of Knowledge* (London, Bombay, Sydney: Constable & Co., 1923), p. 56. Harold Acton Archive VL 121 STR.

individual. Finally, the acquired characteristics between parent and offspring, and the resurrection of traumatic memories in the talking cure rehabilitation of a psychological neurosis.

By engaging with particular eminent individuals within these scientific disciplines, both through correspondence (see Richard Semon, Chapter I; Patrick Geddes, Chapter II; Jane Harrison, Chapter III; Karl Pearson, Chapter IV; Eugene's physicians and psychologists, Chapter VI), and through Lee's reading, we can recognize the important dynamics of cross-pollination. Like so many other fields in which our initial reaction is to think of Lee existing on the peripheries, she then becomes an important and dialogic figure. In considering the way in which Lee embraces and embeds scientific discourse within her work, this thesis aims to recognize the continuing evolution and progression of the scientific fields and the ways in which this evolution and progress becomes stratified and modelled around strata in both Lee's reading and my research.

Shafquat Towheed's 'The Creative Evolution of Scientific paradigms: Vernon Lee and the Debate over the Hereditary Transmission of Acquired Characters' is perhaps still the foremost inquiry into Lee's interest in science. Towheed's essay demonstrated the value of Lee's reading in understanding the ways in which she creatively engaged with theories of evolutionary science, in particular, her dismissal of Lamarckism. Importantly, Towheed highlights the 'cultural afterlife' of the 'supplanted theory' and its narrative trace within works of literature.⁷⁴ My own project has drawn a parallel between Towheed's idea of the 'cultural afterlife' and Lee's association of distinct fragments in differing strata. This thesis examines the archaeological trans-historic object, the anthropological taboo and the slave-trader's stigma, the physiognomic sign, and the psycho- and somatic heritability of retrogressive traits. Whilst this project shares a critical space with Towheed's creative paradigms, the research obtrudes the boundaries of evolutionary science, yet maintains a close alliance with disciplines that share a stratigraphic structure and a connection to memory and heritability.

The first chapter, dealing with memory itself as the explicit focus of scientific discourse, follows the relationship between Lee and the German biologist and mnemonic theorist, Richard Wolfgang Semon. Bringing previously unpublished letters from Semon, Patrick Geddes and Bella Duffy to the fore, alongside letters between Lee and the German

⁷⁴ Shafquat Towheed, 'The Creative Evolution of Scientific Paradigms: Vernon Lee and the Debate over the Hereditary Transmission of Acquired Characters', *Victorian Studies*, 46: 1 (Autumn 2006), 33-61 (p. 34).

author Irene Forbes-Mosse (1864-1946), this chapter explores the interpersonal and intellectual relationships between Lee as reader and Semon's writing on memory. Semon's exacting terminology is considered as influencing Lee's theories of writing in *The Handling of Words* (1923), which was published in the same year that Lee introduced Bella Duffy's translation of *Mnemic Psychology*. Here, I consider Lee's unpublished psychology essays, and their use of the microtome as a metaphor for the stratification of memory.

The second chapter provides a sketch of turn-of-the-century archaeology and geology via Lee's essay 'The Excavations' from *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906) and 'The Tower of the Mirrors' from *The Tower of the Mirrors: and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (1912). Beginning with a comparative reading of Lee's 'The Excavations' and the Italian archaeologist Giacomo Boni's 'Recent Discoveries in the Forum' (1902-1903), the chapter highlights the ways in which Lee embeds Boni's textual and archaeological fragments within the strata of her own texts, trans-historic objects which become a metaphor for the read and written text. I also suggest that Lee's reading in archaeology asks significant questions as to the nature of scientific specialization.

In a progression from archaeological to cultural remains, Chapter III considers Lee's interest in reading anthropology. Using Marett's *Anthropology*, a work held in the archive, I suggest a methodology for anthropological study in which geology plays an influential role; 'it is called stratigraphical method, because it is based on the description of strata, or layers'.⁷⁵ This framework is then used to consider the distinction between anthropology and ethnology. During the 1880s and 1890s, these disciplines differed primarily because of their position on distinction between a belief in the polygenic (anthropology) or monogenic (ethnology) origin of mankind. Lee's own ancestral roots become significant here, along with her familial links to colonialism and slavery, and the moral implications of this. Here I argue Lee uses this material to shroud an anti-slavery narrative in the guise of an anti-vivisection dialogue in *Baldwin* (1886). Additionally, this chapter considers the way in which Lee addresses the work of anthropologist and polygenist, Ernest Crawley, in *Vital Lies* (1912), and his influence on Lee's writing, particularly *The Ballet of Nations* (1915). Lee utilizes the discursive language of Crawley to describe the nationalistic tribalism of the fighting nations, and the contagion of primitive

⁷⁵ R. R. Marett, *Anthropology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), p. 32. Harold Acton Archive VL 398.09 MAR.

emotion in the jingoistic persons—from all nations—partaking in the violence of warfare.

The fourth chapter tracks the significance of physiognomy and facial reading in Lee's 'Oke of Okehurst, or, The Phantom Lover' (1886) and 'Winthrop's Adventure' (1927). Lee's early letters home to her father suggest that from an early age, she was engaged in a Lavaterian form of physiognomic facial reading and its links to the inner self. Yet, as I argue, this certainty dissolves as she moves away from essentialist forms of biological theory, and leans towards a more psychological approach. In tracing Lee's intellectual history, it becomes apparent that physiognomy—despite being apparently superseded by psychology—provided the scientific foundation for later disciplines, such as psychological aesthetics. Chapter four questions the relationship between the subject of the gaze—Alice Oke in 'Oke of Okehurst' and Farinelli in 'Winthrop's Adventure'—and the reliability of the viewer in forming a correct judgement. Using Shoshanna Felman's Lacanian theory of reading, I posit that the reader is both reader and read within the act of reading: or as Felman states 'whoever reads, interprets out of his unconscious'.⁷⁶ Finally, we are taken, via Lee's travel narrative 'Lavater's House' to the home of the father of eighteenth-century physiognomy.

Chapter V builds most directly upon on the work of Towheed in its consideration of biological inheritance. Towheed's article recognizes Lee's playful creative approach in formulating a scientific paradigm yet, is resolute on Lee's dismissal of the inheritance of acquired characteristics as theorized by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.⁷⁷ This chapter begins an implicit dialogue with Towheed's argument by exploring the complex way in which Lee applies neo-Lamarckian arguments to her personal relationships. In doing so, this chapter draws on correspondence relating to Mary Robinson (1857-1944) and James Darmesteter's (1849-1895) engagement. Alongside a reading of unpublished correspondence this chapter examines work by the philosopher and social reformer, Jane Hume Clapperton (1832-1914) and the eugenicist Karl Pearson (1857-1936).⁷⁸

The final chapter engages with psychology, by contrast a well-thumbed area of Lee scholarship. My position on this matter differentiates itself from others within the

⁷⁶ Shoshana Felman, *Jaques Lacan and the Adventures of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 22.

⁷⁷ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. *Philosophie Zoologique on exposition* (Londres: J. B. Baillière, 1830).

⁷⁸ Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1885), and Karl Pearson's *The Moral Basis of Socialism* (London: William Reeves, 1887). *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in Evolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1897), and *The Grammar of Science* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1900).

field by the way in which it problematizes Lee's mediation of her brother Eugene's psychosomatic illness. The chapter uses letters (some previously unpublished) and Lee's literary texts as a framework for structuring the chronology of Eugene's illness and subsequent cure. Furthermore, these texts show the evolution of Eugene's diagnosis and prognosis, through the superseded theories of his physicians. This chapter brings peritextual examples of neurasthenia from the Queens Hospital archives and prescriptions for Eugene's medication into discourse with Lee's *Ottilie* (1883), 'Ariadne in Mantua' (1908) and a selection of Eugene's sonnets.

In considering Lee's work from a multidisciplinary angle, this thesis reflects—albeit on a microcosmic level—Lee's interests as apparent in the Vernon Lee Collection at The British Institute of Florence. Whilst appearing disparate disciplines, there is a progression not only within each discipline, but also between the chapters: archaeology and geology, alongside anthropology and ethnology; physiognomy aligned with the inheritance of biological characters; and finally, psychological inheritance and the stratified psyche. The primary aim of this thesis is to track through Lee's reading and writing—using evidence from the British Institute, Lee's correspondence and texts—her use of, and attitudes to scientific discourse. In doing so, I will use that to explore the way in both theory and practice, Lee thinks about and produces the intertextual relationship itself.

Chapter I

Richard Semon, Mnemic Psychology and the Microtome

I wonder if I ever sent or gave you my last syllabus of biology lectures? If you can read Semon with such ease and pleasure you will easily get through the superficial difficulty & unfamiliarity of my idiom and method.¹

-Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee
(1911)

Richard Semon stresses in *Mnemic Psychology* (1923) that memory is a stratified process, that ‘our individually acquired store of engrams is always at our disposal in chronological strata’.² Each physical memory trace—that which Semon specifically terms the engram—exists within the physical memory store—that which he calls the mneme—in the mind of the individual. These memory traces are latent within the chronologically structured engram-strata, and only when triggered, are they recalled to consciousness. Hypothetically, should the mneme be sliced vertically through, the chronologically stratified layers of engrams (or memories) would appear as horizontal lamina. Semon continues that despite the chronological and stratified storage of engrams in the mneme, engrams can be recalled from multiple strata simultaneously and interwoven, in the process entitled the ‘association of components of different strata of engrams’, creating new engrams from those recalled and the external sensation causing the recall.³ Semon describes this process as that which in the organic world ‘links the past and the present in a living bond’.⁴

This chapter will recover the traces of a small group of cosmopolitan intellectuals, centred around Lee, who produced, mediated, translated, and adopted Semon’s contentious theories. Letters—previously unpublished—by Richard Semon to Lee will be considered, as will the two-way correspondence of Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse, taken from Seward and Zorn’s *The Anglo-German Correspondence of Vernon Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse During World War I: Women Writer’s Friendship Transcending Enemy Lines* (2014). I will

¹ Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee, October 27, 1911. Somerville Library.

² Richard Semon, *Mnemic Psychology*, trans. Bella Duffy, introduction Vernon Lee ((London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), p. 171.

³ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴ Richard Semon, *The Mneme*, trans. Louis Simon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 12.

also consider the intellectual relationship between Lee and Bella Duffy during the period of the translation and subsequent publication of *Mnemic Psychology*, through Duffy's correspondence—which is again, unpublished. Finally, I will focus on the handwritten manuscripts for Lee's unpublished psychological works, which reveal Lee as an enduring student of Semon's teachings.

Joined Up Writing

In his work on Semon, *Forgotten Ideas, Neglected Pioneers*, Daniel L. Schacter highlights (and laments) the fact that Semon's theories did not find an audience in the twentieth century. He adds that Semon's work on memory has 'lay dormant for over half a century, and did not serve as the foundation for future research that Vernon Lee believed it would'.⁵ In a footnote, Schacter adds:

Vernon Lee is one of the intriguing characters in the Semon story whose precise role in the drama is unclear [...] Paget's relationship to Semon can only be speculatively inferred. In her preface to *Mnemic Psychology* Paget twice referred to Semon as her "friend"—once as "my late and very deeply lamented friend" and once when bemoaning Semon's involvement in the acquired characters dispute: "I cannot but regret the time which my friend bestowed upon this subject" [...] What could have linked Semon and Violet Paget? My own speculation is that Semon's brother Felix may have played the role of intermediary. It seems possible that Paget and Felix frequented some of the same London artistic circles and that Felix introduced her to his brother on one of Richard's visits to London. This is admittedly an unsubstantiated conjecture, but the ways in which an English essayist could come to know a reclusive German *Privatgelehrter* are not exceedingly numerous.⁶

Schacter's conjecture that Semon's brother may have moved in the same literary circles as Lee is a possibility. Sir Felix Semon (1849-1921) was an eminent physician, founder of the Laryngological Society of London (1894) and Physician Extra-Ordinary to King Edward VII. However, there is a more plausible alternative. At the same time Lee was corresponding with John Hughlings Jackson and Jonathan Hutchinson regarding her brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton (to be discussed in Chapter VI), Felix Semon was serving as a laryngologist alongside them, as both the photograph in Figure 1, and the *National*

⁵ Daniel L. Schacter, *Forgotten Ideas, Neglected Pioneer: Richard Semon and the Story of Memory* (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis, 2001), p. 180.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery Annual Report 1887 show.⁷ It is therefore perhaps more likely that Lee met Felix Semon in the hospital whilst visiting doctors regarding her brother's ill health. But this possible meeting is of course also conjecture, albeit of a slightly more informed kind.

Figure 1, National Hospital Consultant Group, 1886. Dr. Hughlings Jackson is third from the left on the bottom row, Sir. Felix Semon is second from right on the bottom row.⁸

Whilst their introduction is uncertain, Lee's interest in Richard Semon is authenticated by her reading of his works. The Vernon Lee Collection at the British Institute holds six of Semon's texts, both in German, and in their English translations. Semon's *In the Australian Bush and on the Coast of the Coral Sea, being the Experiences and*

⁷ *The National Hospital for the Relief and Cure of the Paralysed and Epileptic, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, W. C. Annual Report 1887* (London: R. Folkard and Son, 1888). QSA/18902 Courtesy of the Queen Square Archive.

⁸ National Hospital Consultant Group, 1886. QSA/14062. Image courtesy of the Queen Square Archives.

Observations of a Naturalist in Australia, New Guinea and the Moluccas (1899)⁹ was read and owned by Lee, and by Irene Cooper Willis; her friend for twenty-five years and the editor of *Vernon Lee's Letters. With a Preface by her Executor* (1937).¹⁰ Lee's copy of *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen in ihren beziehungen zu den originalempfindungen* (1909) is inscribed 'Mario Calderoni from Miss Paget', and was given to Calderoni and returned to Lee after his death.¹¹ Likewise *Die Mneme* (1911); on the right inside cover 'Mario Calderoni's copy marked by him'.¹² Semon's final work, *Bewusstseinvorgang und Gehirnprozess: eine Studie über die energetischen Korrelate der Eigenschaften der Empfindungen* (1920) published posthumously by his close friend Otto Lubarsch, was also owned by Lee.¹³ The two final works in the collection—both in translation—were shared with Bella Duffy. *The Mneme* (1920) merely inscribed 'Bella Duffy',¹⁴ and *Mnemic Psychology* (1923) owned also by Dorothy Neville Lees,¹⁵ has an inscription that reads:

To my dear, kind and efficacious Doctor Sexton, this copy which belonged to my dear friend BD, from hers gratefully. VL XXXI¹⁶

Lee's friendship with Duffy began in 1880, and they were close—and in correspondence—until Duffy's death in London in 1926. This copy of *Mnemic Psychology* was likely sent to Lee after Duffy's passing, which Lee then saw fit to send to Dr. Helen Sexton. Sexton was an Australian surgeon who moved to Florence in 1919 after serving as a *majeur* in the French Army after the First World War.¹⁷ Sexton was Lee's doctor and

⁹ Richard Semon, *In the Australian Bush and on the Coast of the Coral Sea, being the Experiences and Observations of a Naturalist in Australia, New Guinea and the Moluccas* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1899). Harold Acton Archive VL 919.4 SEM.

¹⁰ Vernon Lee, Irene Cooper Willis, *Vernon Lee's Letters. With a Preface by Her Executor* (London: Privately Printed, 1937).

¹¹ Richard Semon, *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen in ihren beziehungen zu den originalempfindungen* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1909). Harold Acton Archive VL 153.1 SEM.

¹² Richard Semon, *Die Mneme als erhaltendes prinzip im wechsel des organischen geschehens* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1911). Harold Acton Archive VL 153.1 SEM.

¹³ Richard Semon and Otto Lubarsch, *Bewusstseinvorgang und Gehirnprozess: eine Studie über die energetischen Korrelate der Eigenschaften der Empfindungen* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1920). Harold Acton Archive VL 153.7 SEM

¹⁴ Richard Semon, *The Mneme*, trans. Louis Simon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921). Harold Acton Archive VL 153.1 SEM.

¹⁵ The British Institute Archives list this copy as being owned by Dorothy Neville Lees, along with Lee, Duffy and Caxton, but provides no chronology of ownership. Lees was born in Wolverhampton, but moved to Florence in 1903. There she met Gordon Craig—the illegitimate son of Ellen Terry—and became his housemaid, mother to one of his eight sons, and collaborator on the arts journal *The Mask*. She rescued his archives from destruction during the Second World War and donated the collection to the British Institute.

¹⁶ Richard Semon, *Mnemic Psychology*, trans. Bella Duffy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923). Harold Acton Archive VL 153.1 SEM.

¹⁷ Penny Russell, 'Sexton, Hannah Mary Helen (1862-1950)' *The Australian Dictionary of National Biography*. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sexton-hannah-mary-helen-8389> [accessed December 12, 2017].

friend, who looked after her ‘devotedly’ from 1929, until her death in 1935.¹⁸ The Semon texts, more so than any others in the collection, have this evidence of multiple owners, with each reader encountering Semon’s work stratigraphically, serving as a witness to the reader before, and the marks made by that reader on those pages.

After the publication of *The Australian Bush* (1899) and *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* (1904), Semon visited Italy in the December of 1905.¹⁹ Perhaps this was the occasion of Semon’s meeting with Lee, but we cannot be certain where in Italy he stayed, never mind if he visited Florence, or if Lee was herself in the city at this time. Heward Sieberg suggests in ‘Vernon Lee’s German Connections and Her Friendship with Irene Forbes-Mosse’, a meeting in Munich during 1910, but offers no archival source for this.²⁰ All we can be sure of is that, by the period of Semon’s correspondence to Lee in 1911-1913, Semon’s letters are cordial, friendly, and familiar. These letters from Semon survive because Lee selected and gave them to the Somerville College Archives, which suggests in itself that Lee thought them important. Lee’s own letters to Semon are missing however, along with Semon’s own papers, and the manuscripts for his work.

In the first letter of the sequence from Somerville College Archives, dated January 1, 1911, Semon begins with thanking Lee for the copy of *Gospels of Anarchy* (published in 1908) sent by her publisher: ‘finde im hier Ihre 'Gospels of anarchy' vor, die mir Ihr Verleger in Ihren Auftrag ubertandt hat’.²¹ Semon, in a return of intellectual ideas, notes he is sending a travel piece, written a long time ago, of the Australian landscape and the open bays.²² Nothing in this letter suggests a particularly formal relationship, or one that is in its infancy. Indeed, Semon mentions that he and his wife will visit Lee’s close friend, Irene Forbes-Mosse (who was also living in Munich during this period) as she has some pictures of Palmerino (Lee’s home) and San Gervaisio to show him.

Übermorgen wollem wir zum Thee zu Mrs. Forbes-Mosse gehen und sie will uns Bilder von il Palmerino und S. Gervaisio zeigen.²³

¹⁸ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 228.

¹⁹ Schacter, p. 65.

²⁰ Heward Sieberg, ‘Vernon Lee’s German Connections and Her Friendship with Irene Forbes-Mosse’, in *Dalla Stanza Accanto; Vernon Lee e Firenze settant’ anni dopo* ed. Serena Cenni e Elisa Bizzotto (Firenze: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 2006), pp. 285-307 (p. 299).

²¹ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, January 1, 1911. Somerville College Archives. My translation: ‘I have found here a copy of your *Gospels of Anarchy* which your publisher has sent me at your request’.

²² Ibid., ‘bei meiner schilderung seien in ihm sehr lebhaft seine allen erinnerungs builder der australien Landschaft, des offenen Bucht’.

²³ Ibid. My translation: ‘in my descriptions are the lively memories of the Australian landscape, the open bay’.

This letter reinforces the suggestion of a friendly relationship between Semon, his wife, and Forbes-Mosse, presented in his first (extant) letter to Lee. And whilst it could be read that the German national Forbes-Mosse might have introduced Lee and Semon, Semon shows thanks to Lee for the introduction to Forbes-Mosse:

Mrs. Forbes-Mosse hat uns viel un Ihnen erzählt, uns auch Bilder von Ihnen und Ihren Palmerino gezeigt [...] Die Bekanntschaft mit Mrs Forbes-Mosse, sie wir im frunde ja Ihnen verdanken, hat uns die grösse Freude gemacht.²⁴

Both the January and February letters extoll the virtues of Forbes-Mosse, and thank Lee for their continuing friendship. Likewise, both the January and February letters contain Semon's hope for a translator for *Die Mneme*, with which his friend, Professor Francis Darwin, is attempting to assist him. In January, Semon writes that Darwin has suggested a young Cambridge student, who if fluent enough, will do. But by February, the student is out of the picture as Lee and Darwin have colluded and found Mr. Edward Bullough:

Prof. Francis Darwin hat sich um die intersetzung *Dir Mneme* ins englische bemüht, und auf deine Auregung him hat Mr. Edward Bullough in Cambridge, ein junge Psychologe, der dich sie ich gehört habe besonder mit aesthetik, sich bezert erklart, die intersetzung auszuführen.²⁵

We never discover the reasons for Mr. Bullough's unsuitability, and the project is stalled until 1912 when Semon's *Übersetzer* (translator) finds him.

On February 10, 1911, Semon reveals to Lee a shared connection to Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) the biologist, and owner of the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh. Semon writes that they made acquaintance at Jena, where Geddes studied about twenty years ago.²⁶ He continues that despite their paths crossing since, there has been little connection between them. Semon notes that 'Meine Bücher wird es wohl schwerlim keunen'; 'my books will probably make any reconnection difficult'. This appears to be the case in October 1911, when Lee sends a copy of Semon's *Mneme* to Geddes.²⁷ Geddes replies:

²⁴ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, February 10, 1911. Somerville College Archives. 'Mrs Forbes-Mosse has told us a great deal, has also shown us pictures of you and your Palmerino [...] The acquaintance with Mrs Forbes-Mosse, whom we owe to you in the end, has given us the greatest pleasure'—my translation.

²⁵ Ibid. 'Professor Francis Darwin has been working on the interpretation of *Die Mneme* into English, and at your behest, Mr. Edward Bullough at Cambridge, a young psychologist who heard you say he has a particular aptitude for aesthetics, declared that he was interpreting'—my translation.

²⁶ Daniel L. Schacter, James Eric Eich & Endel Tulvig, 'Richard Semon's Theory of Memory', in *Forgotten Ideas, Neglected Pioneer: Richard Semon and the Story of Memory* (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis, 2001), pp. 247-271(p. 722). Semon was awarded his D. Phil at Jena in 1883, his D. Med in 1886, received an associate Professorship at Jena in 1891 and stayed at the university until 1897.

²⁷ Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee, October 27, 1911. Somerville College Archives.

Dear Miss Paget,

Thanks for your encouragement though too generous a letter! Yes, I got Dr. Semon's "Mneme" and plunged into it one evening with avidity. But a mass of business cases, the most serious and difficult I have ever had to plough through, came in the way, & I have ever since been engaged in a very difficult line of work and correspondence, which will take me another fortnight or more to see through, here & in London; while after that I have a delayed book to finish for which editor & publishers are faithfully clamouring. I thus won't get back to biology—(say bio-psychology rather or better still psycho-biology!) till December, and then if I can write with any care & clearness to you and Dr. Semon I will: meantime, I can only send to you this mere acknowledgement, & the same to him, or indeed still less.

I wonder if I ever sent or gave you my last syllabus of biology lectures? If you can read Semon with such ease and pleasure you will easily get through the superficial difficulty & unfamiliarity of my idiom and method.²⁸

While there are no further letters between Geddes and Lee in the Somerville Archive post-1911—which might suggest a schism between the pair, especially after Geddes' reticence to read *Die Mneme* or contact its author—this is certainly not the impression Lee gave to Semon. Whether she revealed to Semon she had sent a copy of *Die Mneme* to Geddes is unclear, Lee likely made it known to Semon that she was on friendly terms with Geddes. Despite Semon's recognition that 'his books' would make any kind of relationship between the two scientists difficult—the reasons for this will be considered below—he still asked Lee to give his best regards to Geddes.²⁹ Of course, we cannot be sure that she fulfilled Semon's wishes, as her correspondence to Geddes is also missing.

In fact, Geddes' letter to Lee dated October 27, 1911 has a brief addendum scrawled across the top of the page which is dated December 1911:

Alas, "snowed under" among the cases I spoke of (for a time got over)
But I'll have to put off mastering Dr. Semon till summer term.³⁰

This is followed by a briefer note to Lee from Anna Geddes, who notes that her husband has 'gone away for two or three days' so she will send the letter on. As Geddes notes, *Die Mneme* was complex in its terminology, and more importantly divisive in content; hence the struggle to find a suitable translator and reviewer. Whilst Lee was obviously keen to fill both vacant roles on Semon's behalf, she nevertheless did not want to become

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, August 26, 1912. Somerville College Archive. 'Bitte grüssen Sie Professor Geddes bestens von mir'.

³⁰ Geddes to Lee, October 1911. See Fig. 2. below.

translator herself, and by the tone of his letter, neither did Geddes. So what was it that prevented Lee and Geddes from publicly supporting or translating *Die Mneme*?

Not Lost in Translation

In *Forgotten Ideas, Neglected Pioneers* Schacter details the critical response from Semon's contemporaries. As *Die Mneme* was a 'controversial work' it was 'almost entirely ignored'.³¹ Semon's theories utilized the structural foundations of Hering's hypothesis of organic memory which in turn built upon those of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and his inheritance of acquired characteristics. Hering's hypothesis accumulated memories across generations, and an individual's memories did not fade with its death, but lived on in subsequent generations. He suggested that 'every organized being now in existence represents the last link of an inconceivably long series of organisms, which come down in a direct line of descent, and of which each has inherited a part of the acquired characteristics of its predecessor'.³² In bringing together the mind-body divide, Hering's acquired memories could be transmitted from generation to generation. The reason the individual is not drowned out by the cacophony of recollection is that these acquisitions are, on the whole, unconscious. Hering's transmission of memories as matter hypothesis, was acquired, and combined with Semon's to synthesize the mneme as a framework for the storage of memory/ engrams.

Semon highlights in the introduction to *Die Mneme* the similarities between Hering's 'Organic Memory' and Thomas Laycock's 'A Chapter on some Organic Laws of Personal and Ancestral Memory' (1879). Schacter notes that Laycock's work on organic memory was expanded upon by 'his famous student, the eminent British neurologist John Hughlings Jackson', who occupied a position at the National Hospital, alongside Semon's brother, Felix (see Figure 1, and Chapter VI).³³ According to Schacter, Semon's contemporaries in biology and psychology—August Weismann, Herbert Spencer, William Bateson and George Romanes—found his neo-Lamarckian stance contentious. They 'found it difficult to accept the idea that the seemingly haphazard process' of evolution in fact preserved 'fortuitously advantageous congenital variations',

³¹ Schacter, p. 97.

³² Ewald Hering, 'On Memory', trans. Samuel Butler, in Samuel Butler, *Unconscious Memory: A Comparison Between the Theory of Dr. Ewald Hering and the "Philosophy of the Unconscious" of Dr. Edward Von Hartmann* (London: David Bogue, 1880), p. 135.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

despite Darwin's own acceptance of the 'fact' albeit supplemented by natural selection.³⁴ Semon developed a construct of memory which linked heredity and habit strongly as components of it. The *mneme* is that 'which in the organic world links the past and present in a living bond',³⁵ it is the 'totality of the mnemonic potentialities of an organism'.³⁶ Semon's introduction to Louis Simon's translation of *The Mneme* states:

it is attested by numerous observations and experiments that the engraphic effects of stimulation are not restricted to the irritable substance of the individual, but that the offspring of the individual may manifest corresponding *engraphic modifications*. Nor is there anything surprising in this.³⁷

The claims that Semon makes regarding the inheritance of engraphic modifications, suggests that the process is dependent upon the transmission of germ-cells, which have been submitted to engraphic stimulation. By suggesting that the effects of the engraphic stimulus (the external sensation that creates the engram) are not only restricted to the irritable substance (*mneme*) reveals that all cells are subject to some engraphic modification. If this hypothesis is followed through, we can extrapolate that the engraphic modifications effect the reproductive cells, which are then passed onto the offspring, which then may manifest these modifications. Semon also believes that 'individual ontogeny is explicable by mnemonic processes', by homophony, each major structural evolutionary change is evident within the development of the human foetus.³⁸ Ontogeny is the recapitulation—condensed over a very short period—of the evolution of the species to that point, itself a stratified process. The evidence supporting Semon's mnemonic theory is that of ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny: morphogeneous excitations which have acted engraphically in each offspring.³⁹ This theory was championed by Semon's mentor, German biologist Ernst Haeckel who defines phylogeny as 'the science of the evolution of the various animal forms from which the human organism has been developed', in particular, in the stem of the organism or the *phylon*.⁴⁰

³⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

³⁵ Semon, *The Mneme* (1921), p. 24.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

³⁷ Semon, *The Mneme* (1921) p. 12. Semon's italics. The English translation is used in this instance as this introduction is absent from the German edition.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 24 In Semon's theory the irritable substance is the nervous substance in which the engraphically acting stimulus is stored in the memory store. The exact location of this area within the nervous system is unknown.

⁴⁰ Ernst Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Scientific Study, Volume I, Human Embryology or Ontogeny*, trans. Joseph McCabe (London: Watts and Co., 1907), p. 2.

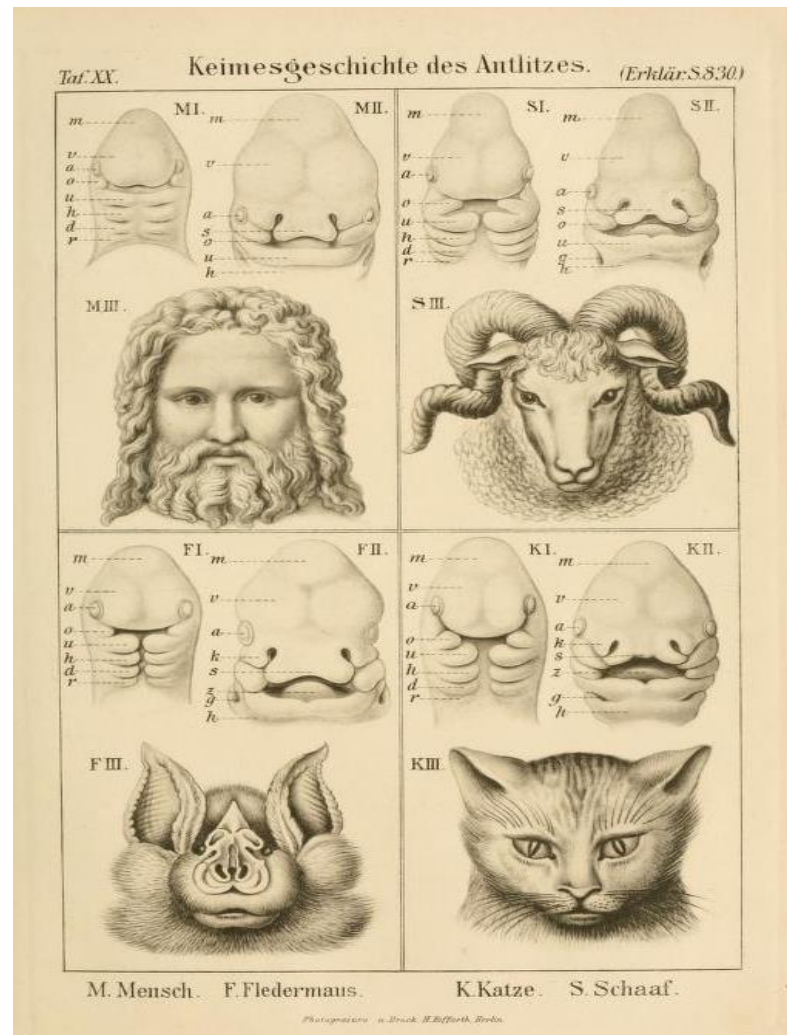


Figure 2, illustration of the foetal germination of the face in four species.⁴¹

This results in the foetal similarities across species at the corresponding developmental stages, see figure 2. In her own introduction to *Mnemic Psychology* Lee notes:

with evidence and arguments he had taken over from Hering and shared with Samuel Butler, to the effect that *Mneme* (or as they had called it memory) was a property of all living matter, and that mnemic phenomena could therefore account for bodily inheritance and for phylogenetic similarities, as much as for memory in the literal acceptance of the word, and for the psychical processes built up by *engraphy and ephory* [...] I cannot but regret the time which my friend bestowed upon this subject.⁴²

It is evident that Lee does not see the value of this aspect of Semon's thinking on memory's relation to biological heredity. In aligning the trigger for cellular development in reproduction with the engram, Semon positions himself and his theory of mneme as

⁴¹ Ernst Haeckel, *Anthropogenie; oder, Entwicklungsgeschichte des menschen. Keimes und stammesgeschichte* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1891), p. 668.

⁴² Vernon Lee, 'Introduction', in Richard Semon's *Mnemic Psychology*, trans. Bella Duffy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), pp.11-53 (p. 26).

counter to those of his contemporaries, due to its basis in neo-Lamarckian forms of inheritance. Lee believed that:

one of the most important factors in Semon's *Mnemic Psychology*, factors doubtless not first discovered by him, but placed by him in such connection as makes them, in their turn, almost fundamental. One of these factors is implicit in Semon's constant insistence that by the *Law of Ecphory*, [...] not only is a memory-image no mere dull duplicate of an original sensation, but, what is far more, no two *successive* memory-images, however referable to a single (i. e. exactly duplicated) stimulation are, as a fact, I will not say *identical*, but exactly *similar*, coincident in everything. They can be only partially similar, in varying degrees; similar inasmuch as having an original common cause. But they are also different, because being consecutive, they have started from various points in theory genealogical tree; because they are related not collaterally, but as a man is to his father and grandfather: evocation producing evocation and each evocation bringing (or taking away) something.⁴³

In using the stratified layers of the genealogical tree to explain the theory of ecphory, Lee reiterates this stance of supporting Semon's theory as it relates to psychology, but not inheritance: there is transmission of characteristics between parents and offspring, but it is partial, in as much as there cannot be duplication, for Lee this works rather conversely in psychological rather than biological terms.

But a decade earlier, Semon was fully committed to the transmission of acquired characteristics and provided multiple examples supporting his hypothesis.

We have an embryological phenomenon, which is the most reliable criterion for these processes, namely, the experimental examination of engraphic action, proves to be undeniably mnemic. The same can be said of the ontogenetic phenomena of the colouring of butterflies.⁴⁴

This example of colouring butterflies is used by Semon to support his theory of transmitted acquired characteristics and the mneme. The experiment bred a central European species of butterfly at different temperatures. Those bred in a colder climate had colourations that resembled those of a similar species of butterfly from a more northerly environment. For Semon, this suggested that many varieties of cell expression were latent within the cells of the butterflies, and that when the engrams were subject to a stimulus (temperature), they produced the corresponding colouration for that environment. This is the same example Patrick Geddes utilizes in his 1911 work *Evolution*, but to a counter-conclusion. Geddes argues that whilst the colouring phenomena is 'suggestive and important' it is not necessarily an example of an adaptive structural

⁴³ Ibid., p. 21. Lee's italics.

⁴⁴ Semon, *The Mneme* (1921), p. 175.

phenomena.⁴⁵ In Lee's copy of Geddes' *Evolution* held at the British Institute, she has marked in firm pencil strokes 'Semon' in the margins beside Geddes' description of the butterfly experiment: a recognition of the intertextual connections between Geddes and Semon, but also of their differing approaches to heredity.

During October 1912, Semon contacted Lee for assistance once more regarding a translator for *Die Mneme*. On this occasion, he has been in contact with a man living in Manchester for many years, a 'chef einer grösseren Firma' by the name of Louis Simon.⁴⁶ Semon jokes to Lee 'Wie schon die Orthographie des Namens Simon zeigt, mit mir nicht etwa verwandt' (as he has spelt Simon in the letter as Semon, and made an attempt to correct) he self-depreciatingly writes 'I'm not too confused'.⁴⁷ Simon, as an avid fan of *Die Mneme*, is unhappy the text does not appear in English, so 'by accident'—'ausversehn'—has decided to take on the translation:

sich um die übersetzung zu wagen und hat im Laufe der letzten 5 monate bereits 1/3 desselben im rohen Entwurf übersetzt.

He adds that in the last five months, Simon has translated a third of it in rough draft and has sent it to Semon for his opinion. Simon, Semon notes, has also enlisted the help of a 'natürlich geborener Engländer' who has studied psychology and is interested in Semon's works to check his translation. Semon confirms that 'Die Bemerkungen und schwarzer Tinte am Rande so wie das angeklebte Stück auf p. 4 stammen von mir und sind für den übersetzer bestimmt'.⁴⁸ But he needs Lee to make the translation work:

Die Lektüre der "Mneme" ist schon an sich im deutschen Original für den, der das Deutsche vollständig beherrscht, ein hartes Stück Arbeit. In einer das Sprachgefühl beleidigenden Übersetzung wird die Lektüre den Lesern auf die Nerven gehen, wird sie abstoßen, und die allgemeine Meinung wird dahin gehen, dies sei einfach ein unmögliches Buch. Wenn diese Gefahr vorliegt, will ich auf eine englische Übersetzung lieber verlaßhaft oder in aller Schicklichkeit verzichtet. Bitte zeigen Sie mir ganz ungeschminkt Ihre Meinung. Sie leisten mir damit einen grossen Freundschaftsdienst. Noch ist es Zeit den so opferwilligen Übersetzer und mich vor einer Selbsttäuschung zu bewahren, die sich vielleicht sparen schwer zahlen würde. Noch einige spezielle Bemerkungen. Das erste Kapitel der "Mneme" ist inhaltlich und formell eines der schwierigsten der ganzen Buches: Ist die Übersetzung dieses Kapitels

⁴⁵ Patrick Geddes & J. Arthur Thomson, *Evolution* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911). Harold Acton Archive VL 576.8 GED, p. 61.

⁴⁶ 'boss of a bigger company'—my translation.

⁴⁷ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, October 13, 1912. Somerville College Archives. 'As the spelling of the name Simon shows, I'm not confused!'—my translation.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 'So far, I have gone through the first chapter on the reproduction of it, and in this respect (except for a passage on page 4, where I have pasted in a long change for the translator), I am quite satisfied'—my translation. See Appendix.

ertraglich, so hat das übrige keine erustren Bedenken. Die verbesserungen und roter Tinte in der maschinenschrift rühren von selbst übersetzer der. Die Bemerkungen und schwarzer Tinte am Rande so wie das angeklebte Stück auf p. 4 stammen von mir und sind für den übersetzer bestimmt. Verzeihen sie dass ich Ihnen diese Arbeit Aufbürden.⁴⁹

Semon asks Lee to check over the translation for lucidity and fluidity. He understands that *Die Mneme* is difficult enough for a native speaker, or one who has fully mastered the German language, so it is a testament to his faith in Lee's command of German that he asks her to check the work of the translator with the original. It is, as Geddes remarked, doubly difficult: engaging with and understanding the theoretical work in German, with the additional complexity of Semon's use of terminology to separate his laws of *mneme* from memory. Semon specifically asks Lee to check over the translation of the first chapter 'On Stimulus and Excitation' as a benchmark. It is this chapter that sets out both Semon's methodology and terminology, and emphasizes that not all stimuli and excitation leads to observable changes. Schacter suggests that this use of very specific—and unique to *Die Mneme*—terminology was to avoid the 'everyday terms commonly used to talk about memory' which he argues 'had too many undesirable connotations to be of precise scientific value'.⁵⁰ In considering this statement, we can refer once again to Semon's letter to Lee:

Ich soll Kontrollieren 1) ob der sinn überall zichtig erfasst und wiedergereben ist und 2) die Terminologie Kontrollieren (Letzteres habe im noch nicht geben Kann es aber leicht marken, weil es; wie ich in Erfahrung gebracht habe, ein German-English Dictionary of terms used in medicine am the Allied Scrivener giebt, das ich mir ausschaffen will).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid. 'Please take a closer look at the first chapter from this topic. The reading of "The Mneme" is in itself, in the German original, a hard piece of work even for one who has completely mastered the German language. If it is an impertinent translation of the language, the text will annoy its readers, it will repel them, and the general opinion will be that this is simply an impossible book. If this danger exists, I want it to be corrected in the English translation. Please let me know your opinion quite unembellished. You are doing me a service of great friendship. It is to save the self-sacrificing translator and me from a self-deception, which would perhaps be hard to take. One more special remark. The first chapter of "The Mneme" is one of the most difficult of the whole book in terms of content and form: if the translation of this chapter is profitable, the rest should have no serious reservations. The improvements and red ink in the typewriter are from the translator itself. The remarks and black ink on the edge and the stuck piece on p. 4 come from me and are intended for the translator. Forgive me for putting this work to you'—my translation.

⁵⁰ Schacter, Eric & Tulvig, p. 722.

⁵¹ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, October 13, 1912. 'I should like to control 1) whether the meaning is everywhere properly recorded and reproduced and 2) to control the terminology (The latter I have not yet been able to give it, but can easily mark it because I have learned that there is a German-English Dictionary of terms used in medicine in the Allied Scrivener, that I can get on with')—my translation.

Semon is adamant that he must maintain control over the terms used. It is these that differentiate Semon's theories from others within the field at the time. In *Die Mneme* Semon explains:

Ich wähle für die so von mir definierten Begriffe eigene Ausdrücke. Zahlreiche Gründe bestimmen mich, von den guten deutschen Worten Gedächtnis und Erinnerungsbild keinen Gebrauch zu machen. Zu den hauptsächlichsten dieser Gründe gehört in erste Linie der, daß ich für meine Zwecke die vorhandenen deutschen Worte in einem viel weiteren Sinne fassen müßte, als sie gewöhnlich gebraucht worden, und dadurch zahllosen Mißverständnissen und zwecklosen Polemiken Tür und Tor öffnen würde.⁵²

Yet Schacter believes that this impacted the reach of *Die Mneme/Mneme*; 'his invocation of admittedly bizarre terms [...] may have created a barrier to the uninitiated reader. More important, these strange expressions clearly identified Semon as a theoretical outsider'.⁵³ This aspect of Semon's authorship is in opposition to Lee's own practice: Semon's terms are defined, distinctive and provide a clarity of meaning. Lee's style is ambiguous, scattered and fragmentary: there is a flux of meaning that allows for multiple combinations of associations.

Louis Simon spent the period between 1912-1914 translating *Die Mneme*, during which he 'had the benefit of the constant advice of its distinguished author'.⁵⁴ As Simon notes in the preface to his translation, it was completed in 1914, and dedicated to Sir Francis Darwin, but the publication 'could not be arranged for until six years later'.⁵⁵ The First World War ensured that this work by a German author, translated into English by a German national living in Manchester, did not see publication until after the fighting had ceased.⁵⁶ Lee's relationship with Semon during this period was mediated by Irene Forbes-Mosse. Lee and Forbes-Mosse's correspondence was often subject to significant delays, due to the need for the mail to go via neutral nations, such as Switzerland, and was read by censors on both sides. Despite this, they maintained contact throughout the war, and Lee was able to reassure Semon of her plans to ingratiate him with the British public. In a letter to Forbes-Mosse dated March 16, 1915, Lee writes '[t]ell R. S. [Richard

⁵² Semon, *Die Mneme* (1911), pp. 15-16. 'I choose my own expressions for the terms I have defined. There are numerous reasons for me to determine not to make use of the good German words memory and memory image. Among the most important of these reasons is that I would have to use the existing German words in a much broader sense than they are being used now, thereby opening the door to countless misunderstandings and purposeless polemics'—my translation.

⁵³ Schacter, p. 195

⁵⁴ Louis Simon, 'Preface', in Richard Semon's *The Mneme*, trans. Louis Simon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Lee, 'Introduction' (1923) p. 11.

Semon] that one of the first things I will do when there is peace is to try and make his ideas known here. That is what we must work at'.⁵⁷ In June that year Lee writes after lecturing at Cambridge undergraduate club: 'tell Semon that I spoke quite a lot about his Mneme and Engrams etc. And that one of my first efforts *guerra finita* will be to see about his translation'.⁵⁸ Lee thanks Forbes-Mosse for sending her a letter from Semon (no longer extant) on March 24, 1916; and Forbes-Mosse on return of post thanks Lee for the letter for Semon.⁵⁹ By June 1916, Lee has found a possible translator for Semon's work at last: 'Should you see R. Semon tell him with my love that there is a possibility of a friend of mine, very competent in biology and philosophy, may get a commission to translate his book on memory and sensation, not the other one'.⁶⁰ The personal affection Lee shows for Semon, alongside a desire to find a translator for *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* suggests true friendship across warring borders. The heavily underlined 'not' brings the line back down to earth: even love and admiration would not permit Lee to support Semon's *Die Mneme*.

Forbes-Mosse's letter to Lee dated December 29, 1918 is full of emotion. In an un-calm hand, she writes she was called upon by a young man she had only previously met 'at the Mneme's'. She continues she was:

not prepared for the dreadful news he gave me: that poor Mneme died suddenly last night—you may imagine the rest. I had seen him last on the day of Xmas Eve, I had brought him flowers and some little presents [...] He talked a great deal about Maria, and I well understood that he was just as broken hearted as 6 months ago. He was very depressed about everything else too, yet I never dreamt of such a thing. He has left his splendid work unfinished—I know how you will grieve. I am quite undone. There one was, so near, and could not hinder this dreadful calamity. What solitude every one of us lives—It is all so sad.⁶¹

Semon's wife Maria had lost her life to cancer in November 1918, and the Allies were victorious in the War. Distraught at the loss of Maria, and concerned that he was suffering from dementia, Semon decided to take his own life. He was found with a single, self-inflicted shot to the heart on Maria's bed; on which was also draped the German flag. Lee notes in her introduction to *Mnemonic Psychology* that Semon's 'life was cut short by his own hand at the age of fifty-nine [...] a series of calamities—the long, hopeless illness

⁵⁷Vernon Lee, *The Anglo-German Correspondence of Vernon Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse During World War I: Women Writers' Friendship Transcending Enemy Lines*, ed. Herward Sieberg and Christa Zorn (Lewiston, NY. & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2014), p. 204.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 251.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 330, 333.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 362.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 419.

of his wife, the solitude in which he was left by her death and the despair of witnessing his country's downfall [...] drove him to suicide'.⁶² Forbes-Mosse's comment 'He has left his splendid work unfinished—I know how you will grieve' reveals that it is not only the loss of Semon's friendship Lee will mourn, but also his unfinished mnemonic masterpiece.

Bella Duffy, Terminology and Intertextuality

Lee's close friendship with the translator of *Mnemonic Psychology*, Bella Duffy, began in Florence in 1880. Gunn quotes from Mary Robinson, when he writes of Duffy's visits to Casa Paget: 'dear Miss Duffy, the Irish doctor's daughter, so witty, with her beautiful melancholy brows and eyes'.⁶³ Lee often visited Duffy in England, staying in Kensington with Duffy in 1883.⁶⁴ She dedicated *Proteus; or, the Future of Intelligence* (1925) to her, and they remained close friends and correspondents up until Duffy's death in 1926, which Lee felt left her in 'intellectual solitude'.⁶⁵ Duffy was a scholar of European languages and an author of works on Madame de Staël (1887) and *The Tuscan Republics* (1893).⁶⁶ Why Duffy chose to undertake such a task as translating *Mnemonic Psychology* is unknown, but her letter from August 28, 1921 suggests she is a writer suffering from ennui:

I ought to have written to you before but for some reason or another I have been for months [...] in the trough of a *deep* depression [...] Dry rot is eating into what is left of my absolutely useless existence. I hope you will want me to 'look up' things for you in the Transactions of the Royal Society.⁶⁷

Duffy's next letter in the sequence reiterates her despair at having 'nobody or next to nobody to talk of what I read' and how she feels 'sometimes like the fabled scorpion which devours its own tail'.⁶⁸ She craves intellectual activity, and hopes that Lee will be the one to provide it for her. But, despite this self-identification as someone with 'dry-rot', Duffy navigates with ease her thoughts on the evolution of mankind and the possibility of human perfectibility (see appendix). She writes to Lee concerning the work of Wilfred Trotter, arguing that tool use in early man has resulted in the 'finish to

⁶² Lee, 'Introduction' (1923), pp. 26-27.

⁶³ Gunn, p. 77.

⁶⁴ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, MA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), p. 116.

⁶⁵ Vernon Lee to Bella Duffy, February 3, 1926. British Library archives.

⁶⁶ Colby, p. 345.

⁶⁷ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, August 28, 1921. Somerville College Archives.

⁶⁸ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, November 21, 1921. Somerville College Archives.

evolution’.⁶⁹ But by February 1922, Duffy is ‘doing Semon’, and asks Lee to alert her to the title of Bertrand Russell’s work in which he ‘mentions Semon’.⁷⁰

Bertrand Russell’s *Analysis of Mind* (1921) is a collection of fifteen published lectures which interlink the fields of physics and psychology. Russell draws heavily on Semon’s theory of mneme, and attempts to simplify and make observable mnemonic phenomena ‘through a theory of mnemonic causation’.⁷¹ By Duffy’s next letter in the sequence—undated, probably from spring-summer 1922—she has read *Analysis of Mind* (‘B. Russell is more respectful’ of Semon’s work), and is in the process of translating Semon’s *Die Mneme*. She writes that:

I wanted to tell you that it is generally not possible to quote Simon’s translation as he has shortened Semon’s remarks & apparently has often merged two or three sentences into one. As he “enjoyed” the constant advice of the distinguished author I suppose this was a quite justifiable process, but it makes searching for quotable passages very troublesome & often quite futile—what a pity Semon despaired and died. I see a third posthumous work of his has been published but I don’t know if it concerns heredity & it wd. have been so interesting to know his views about that. Which is the most important—inherited or acquired engram stores? That is the crux, isn’t it?⁷²

Duffy’s curiosity regarding Semon’s opinions on the heredity of engram stores suggests she inhabits a different position on the matter to Lee. That she questions a stable dichotomy—‘that is the crux’—assuming either the inherited or acquired engram as being more important to the individual’s development suggests she considers both viable, unlike Lee. Lee’s writing up until this point presents her at odds with this theory of the inheritance of engrams between generations, and her introduction to *Mnemonic Psychology* maintains this stance. Yet implicitly she allows for this form of inheritance in *The Handling of Words*. The Reader acquires and is guided by the engrams present, and arranged within the text by the Writer; the intertext is a form of inherited memory, whether the Reader is aware of this or not. Both the text (and the assimilated intertext), plus the Reader’s own engram store coalesce to create the text anew on each reading. The fragments—engrams—from the stratigraphical structure of the mneme intersect to produce a supplemental engram, which is the text.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Lee’s underlining.

⁷⁰ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, February 13, 1922. Somerville College Archives. Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (1921)

⁷¹ Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 85.

⁷² Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, spring-summer 1922. Somerville College Archives.

The translation of *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* was seemingly being driven by Lee, with Duffy explaining her inability to ‘quote Simon’s translation’ as problematic. Duffy lacks knowledge of Semon’s works—‘I see a third posthumous work of his has been published’—and it is clear that she doesn’t know the contents of the latest. What is fascinating is the differing opinions between Lee and Duffy on the specific issue of acquired engram stores. As noted above, Lee adamantly regretted ‘the time which’ her ‘friend bestowed upon this subject’,⁷³ and aimed to keep the biological mneme ‘rigorously separate’ from the psychological.⁷⁴

The *Mnemischen Empfindungen*, of which Miss Bella Duffy has given us the following excellent translation, was intended by the late Dr. Richard Semon as the first in a series of applications and confirmations of the principles laid down in his *Mneme* [...] the *Mneme* (translated by Mr. Louis Simon) and this present work are all that stands for what was intended as a kind of mnemic biology, or even of mnemic philosophy.⁷⁵

In choosing the term ‘philosophy’ over ‘biology’ Lee brings to the forefront, and then dismisses, *Mnemic Psychology*’s associations with its neo-Lamarckian precursor, *Die Mneme*. Indeed, Lee does not attempt to hide this approach, by stating ‘I have altered the title from “Mnemic Sensations” to “Mnemic Psychology” which seems more appropriate to its contents’.⁷⁶ Duffy’s question regarding Semon’s views on the importance of inherited and acquired stores is answered covertly here by Lee’s transposition of the mneme across disciplinary boundaries. In altering the title of Semon’s work post-mortem, Lee is asserting her intellectual control over its contents, and beyond that wielded by the translator. What is especially instructive is that Semon’s wish for ‘die Terminologie Kontrollieren’ in translations of his work, was explicitly outlined to Lee in his correspondence.⁷⁷ Lee’s choice was counter to Semon’s wishes, yet it was something Lee needed to reconcile before promoting his work, and publicly supporting this posthumous translation. In her introduction, Lee stresses the fundamental differences between the titles, positing that it should be possible to disassociate the biological inheritance of acquired memory from Semon’s earlier work.

What I really require to deal with is the difference between Semon’s first work and the second one (of which this volume is the translation)—since upon this difference depends my wish to keep the two works (both published in English by Messrs. G. Allen & Unwin) *rigorously separate*;

⁷³ Lee, ‘Introduction’ (1923), p. 26. Lee’s emphasis.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁷ Richard Semon to Vernon Lee, October 13, 1912. ‘I should like to control 1) whether the meaning is everywhere properly recorded and reproduced and 2) to control the terminology’—my translation.

moreover also my alteration in the title of this translation of the second one. This new title of my finding is intended to emphasize that, unlike *The Mneme*, which is, as a whole, biological, the present volume is a work of pure psychology. The facts and the theories it sets forth are in no wise dependent upon Semon's contention that memory and heredity are two aspects of the same organic function.⁷⁸

Semon's own synopsis of the work supports Lee's reading, but not the new title of 'her finding'. In *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* Semon writes:

Die Erörterung der interessanten und schwierigen Frage, ob überhaupt oberbewußte mnemische Empfindungen aus dem ererbten Engrammschatz ekphorisiert werden können, behalte ich mir für eine spätere Gelegenheit und einen anderen Ort vor. Im vorliegenden Werk beschränken wir uns auf das Studium des individuell erworbenen Engrammschatzes. Dadurch schalten wir gleichzeitig die Diskussion von Vererbungsfragen aus. Es wird sich aber in der Folgezeit zeigen, daß unsere jetzige Arbeit der Lösung dieser Fragen vorgearbeitet hat.⁷⁹

But as we have shown with the translation of *Die Mneme*, the correct terminology was all-important to Semon, and despite this tinkering with the title, Lee and Duffy otherwise maintained his unique lexicon. Yet in re-titling the work, Lee is altering the way in which the work is to be perceived: the work shifts focus from mnemonic sensation, with sensation being defined by Semon as 'sound, colour, or pain from which we infer a condition of excitation in some particular part of our irritable substance',⁸⁰ to psychology, either mental characteristics, or the study of mental characteristics. In this way, the subject changes from those impressions acting on, to the *reading* of, the mneme. In so doing, Lee is interrogating the boundaries of how the work is to be used.

Lee's use of Semon's terminology, tellingly, extended to her annotations in other works of biology and psychology. In her personal copy of Oswald Külpe's *Outlines of Psychology, Based Upon the Results of Experimental Investigation* (1909) there are nine direct mentions of Semon, alongside other associated terms (such as 'engram', 'ecphory' and 'mneme'), in the marginalia. It is possible to infer from these markings in Külpe (and many other works within the archive) that Semon's theories of memory are the benchmark to which other theorists are compared against. And it is obvious that Lee's

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-13. My emphasis.

⁷⁹ Semon, *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* (1909), p. 4. 'The discussion of this interesting and difficult question as to whether super-conscious mnemonic feelings can be ecphorized from the inherited engrams I reserve for a later opportunity and for another place. In the present work, we must limit ourselves to the study of the individually acquired engrams. At the same time, we disable the discussion of inheritance issues. It will, however, later show that our present work has worked to solve these questions'—my translation.

⁸⁰ Semon, *The Mneme* (1923), p. 37.

understanding and knowledge of Semon's works fundamentally colours her approach to mnemonics and psychology. One particular chapter in Külpe—'Memory, Imagination and Reproduction'—is heavily marked. For example, on page 171, Lee has highlighted with a double pencil line in the margins a section relating to the work of physiologist and neurologist Hermann Munk (1839-1912):

We can, therefore, understand why it is that recognition as a general rule refers not to a memorial image, but to a perception, which is judged to be equal or similar to previous impression peripherally excited. Now in the view of certain physiologists, and in particular of Munk, this fact can only be explained on the assumption that the memorial image of such a previous impression is reproduced. When, *e.g.* we judge a colour to be of a familiar quality, the process involved is that of the reproduction of the same colour as previously seen.⁸¹

This is combined with a word to the left of the copy: 'Semon'. This is interesting in the way in which Lee is highlighting—prior to the publication of *Mnemonic Psychology*—an issue that she would later go on to wrestle with, and clarify in her introduction: the term 'image'. She writes in the introduction to *Mnemonic Psychology*:

two more points characteristic of this *Mnemonic Psychology*. One of these is Semon's conception of the essential mnemonic item, namely, the *Image*. The second point is the terminology which Semon invented for his statements and problems. These two points are best treated together, inasmuch as they shed light upon each other. Since it is only by the substitution of such specialized terminology for everyday words, either distorted from their normal meaning or charged with irrelevant, misleading connotations, that we can accustom ourselves to think—well! Of the subject in hand.⁸²

Lee is cognizant that Semon's terminology eradicates the potential for misunderstanding, and one of the key terms for this treatment is the opaque 'image'. Semon's attempt to remove 'irrelevant or misleading connotations' is a symptomatic of his attempt to clarify his complex mnemonic theory. Lee recognizes the usefulness of this mission, stating:

His [Semon's] utter elimination of that awkward and misleading word *Image* will be a blessing even to those who do not, like myself, suffer from a constant abortive effort to *See* an auditory or motor *Image* as if it were a visual one [...] Now you cannot juggle in this way with the word *Engram* or *Engram-Complex*.⁸³

⁸¹ Oswald Külpe, *Outlines of Psychology, Based Upon the Results of Experimental Investigation*, trans. Edward Bradford Titchner (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 190), p. 171. Harold Acton Archive, VL 150.1 KUL.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸³ Lee, 'Introduction' (1923), pp. 50-51.

Whilst Lee compliments herself on her own comprehension of matters, she understands the necessity of creating and applying new terminology to a field already saturated with multiple definitional words. During this period, Lee and Duffy were working simultaneously on projects: Duffy on the translation of *Mnemic Psychology*, and Lee, crucially, was writing *The Handling of Words*, and the introduction to *Mnemic Psychology*. It would appear from the letter dated October 27, 1922, that Duffy was checking the revisions on Lee's work too:

Lane did send me the M. S. & galleys of your concluding chapter. I wrote to say that all you had asked me to look thro were the revises—he replied that “in the circumstances” the stuff shd. be sent to you.⁸⁴

The Handling of Words was published by John Lane and The Bodley Head; as Duffy lived at Fitzjames Avenue, W1, she was in a position to deal with Lee's publishers on her behalf. The next letter in the sequence reveals Duffy as a go-between for Lee and her publisher, writing that ‘I have communicated your views e.g. index politely to J. L.’. The lack of index in *The Handling of Words* suggests that Lee did not feel one was required,⁸⁵ but this mention of an index resonates with Duffy who adds ‘I always meant to translate Semon's own sachregister [subject index]—as an index to the translation’.⁸⁶ *Mnemic Psychology* contains three indices; an index to the introduction, a general index, and an index of authors quoted. By separating authors cited from Semon's lexicon, Duffy replicates the structure of Semon's sachregister. Here she writes of the connection between terms and memory, but in a much more fluid and transcendental way: each word—instead of being limited by a narrow definition, akin to Semon—is open to the creation of associations by its reader. Lee writes:

In this way, the word becomes something like a composite photograph: through the accumulation of different meanings which have been connected it will enlarge its general meaning, and enlarge also, to the extent of sometimes obliterating all special quality the feeling attached to it.⁸⁷

The composite photograph is suggestive of a dialogic practice, akin to the one described by Maxwell as exemplifying Lee's ‘style’ in ‘Vernon Lee's Handling of Words’, or akin to

⁸⁴ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, October 27, 1922. Somerville College Archives. Book *The Handling of Words*.

⁸⁵ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, November 23, 1922. Somerville College Archives.

⁸⁶ Ibid. *Sachregister* translates as subject index.

⁸⁷ Lee, *The Handling of Words* (1923), p. 45.

the blotting-book page.⁸⁸ But the word becomes an uncontrollable site of associations, and because of the individual nature of the mneme moreover, it is a personal site of association, and one that cannot be predicted by the Writer. The word becomes homophonic; Semon's term for the retrieval and resonance of multiple engrams in synchronisation. It is this individual and personal aspect that Lee utilizes as a writer to create a narrative that is simultaneously a directed linguistic journey, guided by the author, and an act of creativity on the behalf of the reader. Furthermore, she notes that 'the Reader's mind is the Writer's palette. The Writer wishes the Reader to realize so far as possible the same thoughts, emotions, and impressions as himself'.⁸⁹ Yet Lee recognizes that this is not always possible: that the reader, as well as the writer, are subject to latent impressions, in the 'unfathomed hidden depths' of the mneme.⁹⁰ Each individual reader will begin the text with their own mneme and engrams in place. What these are is dependent upon the subjective sensory experiences (excitements) of the reader. It is then possible for the language of the text to stimulate the engrams already present in the reader, bringing about a partial return of the stored engram; so, for example, the reader recalls an historic event associated with the words of the text. The reader is creating a stratified layer above the layer of the text, of an entirely personal and subjective reading and response. In this way, Lee as writer has minimal control over the recall of past events, and can only provide triggers for the mnemonic responses which she hopes her readers will respond to.

Lee's explication of Semon's engram in the introduction to his *Mnemonic Psychology* reveals a structural parallel between the dialogic relationship (between writer and reader) and the connection between stimulation and the engram. She writes:

To begin with, his *engram*, or *engram-complex*, as he calls the mnemonic residuum of a stimulation or stimulation-group, is not an *impression* made by something active on something passive. It is the result of a response [...]. It is especially readjustment, a change; and it becomes a link in a chain of change; or rather one of those multitudinous strands of change which cross and re-cross in the warp and woof of universal being.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Catherine Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee's *Handling of Words*', in *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Michael D. Hurley and Marcus Waithe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 282-297.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Lee, *The Handling of Words* (1923), p. 82.

⁹¹ Lee, 'Introduction' (1923), p. 22.

The engram store is both like the copy book—like the links in a chain—and the blotting book—the warp and woof of a fabric. It (theoretically) exists in three dimensions which intersect.

How these webs are woven, in what manner *engram* or *engram-complex* comes to insert itself into *engram* or *engram-complex*, is the subject-matter of great part of Semon's two books.⁹²

These dimensions, the chain, and the woven, intersect in a way that predates the intersection of Kristeva's textual surfaces (via Bakhtin) by forty-three years. Kristeva argues that for Bakhtin, the 'literary word', the minimal structural unit in structuralism, becomes 'an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context'.⁹³ There are similarities between Kristeva's intersection and Lee's composite photograph, or the pages of her blotting-book mind. For Kristeva, the intersect creates possibilities of interconnection that provides a unique reading to each reader. Occasionally for Lee, but most notably for Semon before her, this freedom of intersection is particularly problematic, and the reason for Semon's explicit insistence on fixed terminology. His utilisation of a new and innovative phrasing with which to separate his mnemonic theory from the historic field of memory studies is an attempt to ensure the clarity of his thesis. Each term, new and devoid of context has a fixed meaning, rather than a word as an intersection of writer, reader and context. Lee's destabilizes Semon's fixed terms when she renames *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen in ihren beziehungen zu den originalempfindungen* (*Mnemonic Sensations in relation to original sensation*) *Mnemonic Psychology*. In doing so, Lee expands Semon's reader's intertextual and associative field to include psychology, and mirrors the connected yet stratified structure of the mneme itself.

The Microtome

'The Psychological Microtome' is one of a small collection of Lee's unpublished manuscripts held by the Colby College archives. It was possibly written during 1932-34, and is concerned with Lee's psychological *Weltanschauung*. In this work Lee reveals a historical desire for a 'psychological instrument fine enough to bring the ego and its

⁹² Ibid., p. 23.

⁹³ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 35.

correlated otherness' within her understanding, when she realizes—prompted by Maria Waser's *Life of Monakow*—that this instrument (the microtome) already exists and was revealed to her by Semon. The microtome is a machine used to cut thin sections of a material for study, often under a microscope. Charles Roy, the author of *A New Microtome* (1890) explains that the method of using the tool is simple. The tissue must be set in 'an appropriate embedding mass'—usually a mixture of white wax and olive oil—and then placed on the moveable plate, and pushed through the section cutter, which must be sharp.⁹⁴

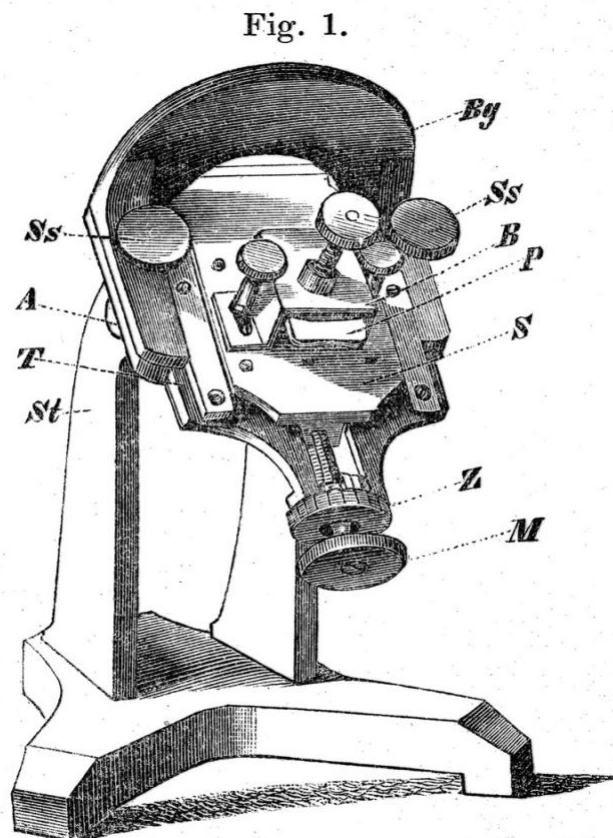


Figure 3, The Microtome, designed by Wilhelm His, Wellcome Collection.

Lee writes that Semon showed her this at 'that last time of meeting before the War, if not the machinery itself [...] at least its result'.⁹⁵ The result was a fish 'sliced microscopically and set between slides of glass' so that the observer could 'see its minutest tissues in separate sections which put together presented the whole fish intact'.⁹⁶ In realising the instrument required is the microtome, Lee begins to recognize that the

⁹⁴ Charles Roy, 'A New Microtome', *The Journal of Psychology*, 1: 2 (May 1879), 19-23 (pp. 20-21).

⁹⁵ Vernon Lee, 'The Psychological Microtome', in *Unpublished Psychological Essays*, Colby College Archives.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

slicing action of the machine, the separating of an (anatomical) object into stratified sections in order to better understand the workings, has very explicit parallels with the way in which memory is structured and retrieved. She writes:

there has come the vague knowledge of my having employed and employing, an instrument of this kind. Also the vague knowledge already of some years' standing, that I had approached these subjects through my aesthetics. And thinking further of when and how I did so, it becomes obvious that my microtome, my first rough & ready psychological slicer, were my gallery-diaries in which (neglecting any kunstforschung) I sliced the concrete work of art into how it made me feel, and thus got a series (like those of Semon's fish) of separate real moods and mood-concomitants, often very dissimilar but making up my total experience of a particular work of art.

Lee's memory of the instrument itself is self-consciously vague ('vague knowledge'), yet the engram of the microtome is associated by a partial return to Lee's Gallery Diaries, explored in *Beauty and Ugliness: And Other Studies in Physiological Aesthetics* (1912), and *The Handling of Words*:

Then, of course, came my Questionnaires, let alone the analyses in my *Handling of Words*. All of which amounted to such microtoming, slicing and isolating the piece of music or the page of literature into the different responses of the various Venuchspersonen and of myself.

Using the work of art as a stimulus for an ecphoric response or responses, Lee has the ability to separate the 'real moods and mood-concomitants' associated with that particular work, using a method 'prepared by Semon's *Mneme*'. In this way, the microtome becomes a mode of retrieval for stratigraphically stored aesthetic memories. Yet this is abstraction: in studying aesthetic taste, Lee is applying the metaphor of a tool to her psychological analysis of herself, and others. The microtome's function is the preparation of tissue—dead tissue—for microscopic analysis, the tissue becomes abject, object, fixed. The microtome in this instance then is at odds with the development of the mnemonic structure and collation of engrammatic material.

Unusually for Lee, this unpublished piece positively engages with the Freudian unconscious and with sexuality. Lee argues that due to the historical repression—and the recent revelation of sex as 'the explanation of all things'—that psychological study has reached a stasis, in that it has uncovered what it believes to be the deepest strata of the psyche now and refuses to delve any deeper. She questions:

But when the conspiracy of silence shall have been forgotten and this item of sex become familiarly recognized and its importance taken for granted, shall we not discover something different beneath it and beneath all else? Something once oppressed not because banned or unspoken, but

unrecognized because its recognition requires psychological instruments hitherto unused, equivalent for mental science to that microscopic slicer which I was once shown by Semon. A psychological microtome enabling us to separate the layers of concrete thought & feeling and to lay bare the essential constitution and see the wholes into which they unite? Not merely the stuff of brain and nerves, but rather the organic motions constituting life?

Lee's answer to this lies in her postscript, wherein she notes:

But there is more than a difference, there is an opposition between what they call analysis, which is, I think, merely digging into their patient's lapsed biography, and my attempt to isolate and compare the more elementary items of consciousness.

The Freudian analysts (the 'they') described are utilising a guided or mediated methodology of recovery that does not go beyond the superficial layers of thoughts and feelings, other than a reading of the patient's lapsed biography. Lee appears instead to be alluding to a tapping into the unconscious and unrecognized realm of mneme, a primitive 'essential constitution' and cause of the 'organic motions constituting life'. In attempting to isolate what she terms elementary items of consciousness, Lee is suggesting an innate selfhood that resides in the strata below, completely unknown, and driving the individual at a deeper level than a purely sexual causality. Does this suggestion of an instinctive and organic drive for life suggest that perhaps Lee was shifting her stance on Semon's mnemonic principle encompassing organic memory and the inheritance of acquired characteristics? Perhaps her use of the phrase 'I had been prepared by Semon's *Mneme*' is a suggestion that Semon's 'biological' work—which Lee hoped to keep rigorously separate from *Mnemonic Psychology*—has become relevant for her towards the end of her life.

Early in her engagement with Semon's work, Lee opposed his theory of biological mnemonic inheritance, yet, during her final (and unpublished) essays her resolve appears to have shifted, and she became curious regarding the innate driving forces that effect organic motion. Only by laying bare the composition of the mneme in this way using a hypothetical microtome can thought, feeling, and organic motion be revealed and re-unified. There is a sense of simultaneity between the fragmentation and unification of framework underlying psychological and biological memory, and it is this framework that maps explicitly onto Lee's practice of writing. Thus, through the period 1910-1935, there is ample evidence to show that Lee's thinking is inextricably linked itself with Semon and his stratigraphic idea of the mneme, that these ideas provided a structure through which Lee explicitly modelled stratigraphical modes of thought, and that she aimed at applying

his work beyond its disciplinary boundaries and in its implications for the intertextual mechanisms of writing and reading. Nowhere is this more evident than in the use of the blotting-book metaphor. This stratigraphical laying bare is evident in a very literal sense in the next chapter, yet the framework is essentially reversed: geological layering becomes a site (and trigger) for a mnemonic response.

Chapter II

Vernon Lee and the Earth Sciences

if we would possess the world and its kingdoms, past, present, and future, and not merely our own image reflected in our own wash-pot, we must take the trouble to ascend into towers, and go to the expense of furnishing our soul with as many mirrors as possible, and a steady, well-oiled winch wherewith to turn them in some directions and avert them from others.¹

-Vernon Lee, 'The Tower of the Mirrors' (1914)

As discussed in Chapter I, Semon's engram theory proposes a structural symmetry between the mnemonic system and geological layering by alluding to the 'chronological strata' of the engram store.² This interplay between geology and memory is the focus of this chapter.³ For Lee, this finds its most expansive creative expression in her novel *Louis Norbert: A Two-Fold Romance* (1914). Interweaving narrative strands of memory with the discipline of archaeology, Louis Norbert's imaginary portrait is a textual representation of Lee's interest in stratigraphy, and more importantly, the way in which this maps onto the field of intertextuality.⁴

Louis Norbert's 'young Archaeologist' provides tours around the Campo Santo di Pisa for affluent sightseers. He is being miserably employed in this task by Lady Venetia Hammond when Hammond 'discovers' the tombstone of Louis Norbert de Caritan.⁵ By uncanny coincidence, Norbert's portrait hangs in the 'Ghost's Room' of Hammond's ancestral home, yet the family know little bar his name.⁶ This serendipitous discovery of Norbert's connection to Pisa (he is buried there) inspires the young Archaeologist and Hammond to research Norbert's life. Norbert is recovered from his obsolescence by piecing together splinters of evidence; yet Norbert's fragmentary remains lie not in the

¹ Vernon Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors: and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), p. 6.

² Richard Semon, *Mnemonic Psychology*, trans. Bella Duffy, introduction Vernon Lee (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), p. 71.

³ Whilst Lee's Introduction to the translation of *Mnemonic Psychology* was not published until 1923, Lee was able to read *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* in German in the original text. Letters dated between 1911-1914 show this to have been the case. Semon's influence on Lee will be further considered in Chapter VI.

⁴ I would argue here that Lee's rendering of the fictional character, Louis Norbert, in a historical setting bears a formal allusion to the work of Walter Pater. Walter, such as *Imaginary Portraits* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1887).

⁵ Vernon Lee, *Louis Norbert: A Two-Fold Romance* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

geological strata of the earth (as the archaeologist figure would suggest), but in the marginalia surrounding manuscripts and texts.

Well, there we are [...] pouring over old yellow volumes of the *Pastor Fido*, of Virgil, and other classics, and books on natural science having belonged to the learned, the once gloriously crowned, Abbess, and over piles of manuscript music, **in search of faint, faint marginal marks which mean that here she is** (so at least we imagine) addressing her correspondent, or being so addressed by this mysterious, anonymous, *perhaps non-existent*, (quite as non-existent as Hermann and Isabella!) creature.⁷

The books, letters and manuscripts that exist within the text are presented as a site for the storage of encrypted information regarding the love affair between Norbert and the Abbess. The Abbess sends Norbert a book, in which she places a slip stating where he would find material for his ‘studies’. In the margins of these indexed pages, there is written the numbers of further pages, and on these pages, words underlined. Once brought together, these disparate clues betray a written communication between the clandestine lovers.⁸ In this way, each archival text in the novel becomes the key to unlocking Norbert’s identity—and the *billet-doux*—through its peritextual traces and for these messages to become comprehensible the texts have to be situated chronologically within the lover’s narrative. Therefore, the relationship is represented as stratified both temporally (through Norbert’s borrowing, reading, and deciphering of books) and spatially (through the stratified pages within the book). Furthermore, the texts sent by the Abbess, and read by Louis Norbert have multiple functions: they exist as a two-dimensional scholar’s copy book—should they be intercepted—and as a palimpsestic blotting-book for the lovers. It is a literal rendering of intertextuality, the shaping of one written line by the reading of another. The chronological epistolary form of Lee’s *Louis Norbert* also intersects this stratification by revealing (in a much more regular and linear form) the intertextual discovery of this romance through letters between the young Archaeologist and Hammond.

Importantly, the concepts embodied within the fiction of *Louis Norbert*—strata, memory and the text as a site for mnemonic potential—are traceable through Lee’s oeuvre and through her own marginalized (in the sense of literally being in the margin) responses to other works. The read text becomes a stimulus for the production of memory and the site of mnemonic potentiality via an intertextual response,

⁷ Ibid., pp. 125-26. My emphasis in bold.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 281-82.

demonstrating the parallel between the palimpsestic page and the stratified archaeological site. In *Louis Norbert*, Lee is championing a form of scholarship that centres on the read, and then annotated, text. Indeed, we already know that Lee made gifts to friends of works that contained her own marginalia, that the library from Villa Il Palmerino was a bequest to the British Institute, and that this resource was open to researchers (during the period in which her personal letters were not). Had Lee left her readers the key to unlocking the intertexts (and biography) hidden in her own work? It is then with the figure of the archaeologist in mind, that I myself begin to excavate these textual fragments from Lee's corpus.

What is remarkable about the archive at the British Institute is the conspicuous absence of works written by Lee herself. Of Lee's forty-plus published works, only two texts appear in the archive. Both are implicitly concerned with the geological and topographical sciences: *The Genius Loci* (1899), and *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on The Genius Loci* (1925). Why these titles remained in the bequest is unknown. The prominence of *Genius Loci* and *The Golden Keys*, and their colloquy with titles read by Lee on geography, geology, and physiography, indicate Lee's assimilation of this discourse into both fiction and non-fiction, deploying metaphors of stratification, the text and the key. The amalgamation of these disciplines—geology, geography, archaeology and physiography (physical geography)—with theories of memory give a unique insight into the study of these semi-autobiographical travel narratives.

Lee's copy of A. H. Green's *First Lessons in Modern Geology* at the British Institute describes the distinction between geology and geography, definitions useful in this chapter in noting the differences between archaeologist Giacomo Boni's geological and archaeological study and Patrick Geddes's geographic survey. And whilst this text is without Lee's annotations, there are signs of the work being read, such as cut and creased pages.⁹ Marion Newbigin's *Modern Geography* is a concise synopsis of the discipline in which Lee has marked examples of human adaptability to environment, and the distinctions between race and nation, and is heavily annotated.¹⁰ Likewise, the copy of William Ward Fowler's *Rome* has multiple annotations which consider life in Rome during its inhabitation, all from a single chapter 'Life in the Roman Empire'.¹¹ In this work, Lee's

⁹ A. H. Green & J. F. Blake, *First Lessons in Modern Geology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898). Harold Acton Archive VL 551 GRE.

¹⁰ Marion Newbigin, *Modern Geography* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911). Harold Acton Archive VL 912 NEW.

¹¹ William Warde Fowler, *Rome* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912). Harold Acton Archive VL 937 FOW. (Lee's crossing through).

annotations focus on the class disparity between peoples of the Empire outside of Italy, and the ways in which labour was enforced. She writes in the margins: ‘agriculture was slave labour, it was ~~the~~ not of the village but of the plantation’.¹² These works, even briefly considered, clearly suggest that Lee’s interest in the earth sciences was wide-ranging, and active (by this I mean annotating the read text, creating personal indexes, and referencing within her own texts) throughout the period in which she was writing. These seemingly disparate works provide fragmentary evidence of the chronology of her reading, of which the archive is a substantial, but obviously not complete, record. Collating these texts (as fragmentary remains) into temporal strata (defined chronological periods) enables the Lee scholar to speculate upon intertextual influences within her work, extant within the same or immediately pre-or-proceeding strata. Lee’s own work, is subconsciously—if not consciously—connected to the works within her archive. It (and these works in particular) provides the engramic substrata of geographic/ geologic theory for Lee’s written work, and it is these intertextual and stratigraphic fragments which I hope to recover, and to an extent, narrativize.

Peter Gunn considers Lee’s fascination with travel and place as stemming from her formative years as part of a semi-nomadic cosmopolitan European family.¹³ In *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places* (1908) she notes that her youth was jostled by intense bouts of travel, but this was not the cause of her passion for the *genius loci*. Because this was, as Lee simply defines it, ‘*moving*, not *travelling*’.¹⁴ Lee writes:

the passion for localities, the curious emotions connected with the lie of the land, shape of buildings, history, and even quality of air and soil, are born, like all intense and permeating feeling, less of outside things than our own soul [...] The places for which we feel such love are fashioned, before we see them, by our wishes and fancy; we recognize rather than discover them in the world of reality; and this power of shaping, or at least seeing, things to suit our heart’s desire, comes not of facility and surfeit, but of repression and short commons.¹⁵

In this way, Lee’s experience of the journeys between the Paget-Hamilton’s European homes was ‘short commons’; meagre rations of space and place that left her unfulfilled. Only when place was linked with sentiment—when she engaged in *travelling*—did the *genius loci* appear.

¹² Vernon Lee marginalia in William Warde Fowler. *Rome* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), p. 215. Harold Acton Archive VL 937 FOW.

¹³ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee, Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 25.

¹⁴ Vernon Lee, *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908), p. 6. Lee’s italics.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

This sentimentality is connected to a form of matriarchal mediation; connected to and acquired by ‘our mothers and grandmothers’, the ‘venerable and exquisite priestesses of the Divinity of Places’ and passed down through the generations of flâneuse.¹⁶ The zest for travel and sensitivity to the spirit of place is handed down. For Lee it is from her own mother Matilda:

We never went out without a book; and, so long as my memory reaches, my mother always read out loud while walking, interrupting herself only to enlarge upon the subject, to tell stories, and discuss theories; so that every turn of every promenade in Europe, nay, every bench and bush thereof, represents for my mind a host of imaginary persons and places.¹⁷

And from the indomitable Mary Singer Sargent, the mother of John:

I do not think my family ever realized Mrs. S _____’s high vocation, for they did not know of the cultus of the Genius Loci, or even of his existence [...] For what I saw was less potent than what I overheard at meals in the hospitable little house (a sacred spot for me now) which looked across town to St. Peter’s.¹⁸

It is not only the sensory or sensual reaction to place that conjures the genius loci, but the association of memory which brings it to life. This relies upon an association between engrams and the external (to the body) stimulus. Thus the way in which Lee was introduced to place through the mediation—but not the control—of the genius loci, is a model for her own writing. Lee becomes the high priestess of the genius, guiding the reader through the textual landscape, and allowing for the conjuration of each reader’s personal spirit of place.

It is with these things in mind—Lee’s matriarchal priestesses, her travel writing, and *Genius Loci* and *The Golden Keys*’s possibly significant place in the archive—that the connections between Lee’s reading on geology, archaeology, geography and physiography suggest themselves as important. Yet Lee’s travel writing has received only a small amount of critical attention, most notably in Richard Cary’s ‘Aldous Huxley, Vernon Lee and the Genius Loci’,¹⁹ a study of the correspondence between the two authors and Huxley’s admiration of Lee’s travel narratives, and Rita Severi’s ‘Vernon Lee

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

¹⁹ Richard Cary, ‘Aldous Huxley, Vernon Lee and the Genius Loci’, *Colby Library Quarterly*, 5; 6 (June 1960), 128-140.

Through the *Enchanted Woods* of 'Travel Writing'.²⁰ Daniel Moore's 'Modernity, Historiography and the Visual-Material History of Rome: Vernon Lee's *The Spirit of Rome*' argues that in privileging material objects rather than documentary sources and evidence, Lee is aligning herself with an aesthetic agenda.²¹ This seems at odds with the approach Lee seems to take in *The Spirit of Rome* where it is precisely the material objects which produce a mnemonic response in Lee (and her reader), engaging documentary and qualitative sources *alongside* the sensual and imaginative. Patricia Pulham's essay 'Duality and Desire in *Louis Norbert*' explores sexuality and desire in Lee's novel, whose protagonist is the young and naive archaeologist, in search of the faint marginal traces of Louis Norbert, as discussed earlier.²² Hilary Fraser and Nick Burton's "'Mirror Visions" and "Dissolving Views": Vernon Lee & Patrick Geddes's Outlook Tower' situates Burton and Fraser's short film about the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh and the panoptic use of the camera obscura therein, which I will discuss in more depth below.²³

The preliminary textual focus of this chapter will be the journal entry 'The Excavations' (February 27, 1902) published as part of *The Spirit of Rome* in 1906. In this entry/essay, Lee visits an archaeological dig presided over by Giacomo Boni (1859-1925), and witnesses the stratified soil of the Roman Forum first hand. Through this essay it becomes obvious that it is the fragmentary remains within the strata at the site that draw Lee's attention, yet, unlike Boni, she does not use these items as a way of exploring a single chronology of the historic past, but as a way of exploring multiple methods of unifying the past with present experience. These fragments become a way of thinking about time and space and writing's ability to negotiate beyond these boundaries. The archaeological remainder has, in a much broader sense, a parallel with the intertextual element: the material, symbolic, or linguistic unit that triggers a new understanding of a period, space or text. It is obvious from Boni's own article 'Recent Discoveries in the Forum' (1903) that his own discoveries discussed within the article—and those

²⁰ Rita Severi, 'Vernon Lee Through the *Enchanted Woods* of Travel Writing', in *Dalla Stanza Accanto: Vernon Lee e Firenze settant'anni dopo*, eds. Serena Cenni e Elisa Bizzotto (Firenze: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 2006), pp. 219-28.

²¹ Daniel Moore, 'Modernity, Historiography and the Visual-Material History of Rome: Vernon Lee's *The Spirit of Rome*' in *Origins of English Literary Modernism, 1870-1914*, ed. Gregory Tague (Bethesda, MD: Academica Press, 2009), pp. 297-314.

²² Patricia Pulham, 'Duality and Desire in *Louis Norbert*', in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, eds. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 23-142.

²³ Nick Burton and Hilary Fraser, "'Mirror Visions" and "Dissolving Views": Vernon Lee & Patrick Geddes's Outlook Tower', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 28: 2 (June 2006), 145-160.

completed with his ‘reasoned hypothesis’—are those of which Lee writes of in her journal entry. In parallel to her amalgamation of the past and present, there is evidence to suggest that Lee’s thinking reflected a movement away from specialization in the earth sciences (geology, geography, mineralogy) towards a more generalized (or interconnected) survey of the scientific field.

Of course, the application of survey and interconnection could, at first glance, align Lee’s thought with that of Boni. But where Boni attempts to create a complete narrativization of the Roman Forum, Lee deliberately provides gaps, or conjoins two distinct ways of approaching the fragment, to provide a fresh interpretation. Lee’s approach of surveying, fragmentation, and interconnectivity finds a kindred spirit in Patrick Geddes, a biologist, sociologist and town planner with whom she began a friendship with around 1910, and whose outlook tower she discussed in *The Tower of the Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (1914). At these two textual sites (Boni’s excavation and Geddes’s tower) Lee’s engagement with psychological and archaeological thought are intimately entwined. In considering two of Lee’s travel essays (‘The Excavations’ and ‘The Tower of the Mirrors’) in this way, the archaeological and geographical site not only becomes a vessel for Lee’s own stratified memories, but also for those of her readers who, in bringing their own unique experiences to Lee’s text, also contribute to its palimpsestic cast. This dynamic between writer and reader, and the freedom of interpretation is one that Lee is deliberately allowing to occur.

Lyell, Boni and the Key

Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* was published in three volumes between 1830-3 and was integral to the development of geology as a science during the early Victorian period. Lee echoes Lyell’s apparently most famous saying from *Principles*—‘the present is the key to the past’—when she writes in *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906) that ‘I felt very keenly that the past is only a creation of the present’. The phrase ‘the present is key to the past’ is often attributed to Lyell but is nowhere to be found in his published works. Lyell’s *Principles* itself in fact relies on earlier textual foundations, such as the work of the Uniformitarian James Hutton.²⁴ Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth Volume I* (1795) argues that:

²⁴ Vernon Lee, *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1906), p. 142. Also of note: *The Geological Society’s* 1998 special publication considering the life, influence and legacy of Charles Lyell was titled *Lyell: The Past is the Key to the Present*. Whilst the phrase is not directly attributed to Lyell, it is thus still deeply entwined with his geological and Uniformitarian theories.

It must not be imagined that this undertaking is a thing unreasonable in its nature; or that it is a work necessarily beset with an unsurmountable difficulty; for, however imperfectly we may fulfil this end proposed, yet, so far as it is to natural causes that are to be ascribed the operations of former time, and so far as, from the present state of things, or knowledge of natural history, we have it in our power to reason from effect to cause, there are, in the constitution of the world, which we now examine, certain means to read the annals of former earth.²⁵

Or, as it is referenced more succinctly in the index: ‘present, key to past, vol. I, 169’.²⁶

Hutton’s demonstration is the precursor to Lyell’s famous theory of immutable constancy, the idea that it is possible to establish past or predict future events accurately, based on knowledge of the natural principles that shape our current terrestrial system. Lyell writes:

The geologist [...] will regard every fact collected representing the causes in diurnal action, as affording him a key to the interpretation of some mystery in the archives of the remote ages.²⁷

Here, Lyell sees an opportunity for understanding the mysteries of the ancient universe and its repercussive actions in the everyday (the diurnal) events. It is through an understanding of these everyday occurrences that the geologist is able to unlock the events of a past age.

Lee’s reversal of the phrase—the ‘past’ being a created facet of the ‘present’—suggests that Lee sees the ‘past’ residing in both the past and the present sequential spaces simultaneously. The phrase suggests a threshold between the sequential spaces—Lee chooses to amalgamate them. Moreover, Hutton/Lyell’s phrase separates the past and the present by the use of a ‘key’: ‘the present is key to the past’. Hutton/Lyell’s key, then, is the use of scientific reasoning based on immutable constancy, and the trope of the key is of a mechanical device, a piece of hardware, or the gloss to the symbols on a map: a necessary mechanism if we want to cross the threshold of geological knowledge from present to the past. Whilst this phrasing appears to posit a scientific rationale as key to the geological sciences, the theory is explained and underpinned by a metaphor; an intellectual act of creativity and lateral thinking.

²⁵ James Hutton, *Theory of the Earth with Proofs and Illustrations*, Volume I (Edinburgh & London: Messers Cadell, Junior and Davies; William Creech, 1795), p. 169.

²⁶ James Hutton, *Theory of the Earth with Proofs and Illustrations*, Volume III (Edinburgh & London: Messers Cadell, Junior and Davies; William Creech, 1795), ‘Index to Vols. I. and II’ p. ix.

²⁷ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, ed. James A. Secord (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), pp. 101-2.

Lee deploys the trope of the ‘key’ most fully in *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on the Genius Loci* (1925). *The Golden Keys* is a collection of travel essays that begins with ‘The Street of the Golden Keys’. In the introduction to this volume, Lee writes that:

But GOLD, we are told by recent anthropologists, is the oldest known of all metals, and prized by our remotest ancestors (sometimes by ourselves) for its curative and magical virtues. And KEYS are surely among the most needed of implements, given the fact of dishonesty of Man and the secretiveness of Nature join in keeping whatever we wish to have, and whatever we want to know, locked up and inaccessible save their use.²⁸

A key is an object that allows intellectual access to the workings of the natural world, yet also posits a certain level of exclusivity. The implement is not one that everyone can have; it is needed for gaining an understanding, unravelling, but at the same time restrictive, it allows only limited (the key-holder’s) access. Both Lee’s and Hutton/Lyell’s keys are metaphoric and physical. Lee’s ‘Golden Keys’ are not only an exclusive tool to open up understanding, but they are also golden (prized and rare) and (very significantly) plural.

The Spirit of Rome shares this travel essay form, but where *The Golden Keys* visits multiple European destinations, its focus is Rome. Lee reveals in her opening chapters that the collection of short essays reproduced are journal notes from her travels in the city from 1895 to 1905. The excursions and wanderings in the text are thus narrated in an intensely personal style; she explores the city with friends, and is not afraid to be critical of Rome’s people or their city. The book begins with an ‘Explanatory and Apologetic’ in which Lee justifies *The Spirit of Rome*’s publication: she considers her notes have a value ‘to those who love Rome, or are capable of loving it’. Lee speaks to her readers directly in what she terms a ‘stammering manner’, or rather she allows the reader to read ‘what Rome, day after day and year after year, has said’ to her, even if that is fragmentary and inconsequential.²⁹ In the chapter ‘The Excavations’, Lee re-tells her experiences of the dig managed by Giacomo Boni in the Roman Forum. The figure of Boni the archaeologist may well have provided inspiration for the Young Archaeologist in *Louis Norbert*. But what initially drew Lee to this discipline and to Boni’s site? Daniel Moore suggests that Lee’s ‘archaeological impulse’ was inspired by Eugenié Sellers Strong (1860-1943), archaeologist and Assistant Director of the British School at Rome.³⁰ Sellers Strong’s work not only stimulated Lee, but she—in all probability—fixed the meeting

²⁸ Vernon Lee, *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on The Genius Loci* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1925), p. viii.

²⁹ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 10.

³⁰ Moore, pp. 306-307.

between Lee and Boni documented in ‘The Excavations’. In her biography of Jane Harrison (2002), Mary Beard notes that Boni and Sellers Strong were in correspondence, with letters between the two excavators being stored in the British School at Rome and the Girton College Archive at Cambridge.³¹

Boni was a pioneering Italian archaeologist, whose excavation methods were ground-breaking (quite literally). Through Boni’s use of photographs and his meticulous notes, R. Ross Holloway argues, crucially, that Boni discovered the ‘logic of stratigraphy’ in the Forum: ‘the temporal sequence of superimposed layers’ that exist naturally within the forum, or are man-made.³² Indeed, Holloway believes that Boni’s training as an architect gave him an invaluable sense of ‘three-dimensionality’ with which to view the site.³³ Jeffrey A. Becker’s entry on Boni in the *Encyclopaedia of Global Archaeology* reveals that his stratigraphic excavations in Rome were ‘revolutionary’ in both method and scale, and the ‘first of [their] kind in the field of Classical archaeology’.³⁴ Becker argues it was Boni’s experience as an architect—specifically in Venice—which enabled excavations to take place below the water table. The depth of the trench, over six meters in some locations, and the breadth of the area of study enabled Boni to discover and document more than 30 anthropic strata in the Forum.³⁵ Through his excavations, the Forum became Boni’s ‘key’ to understanding the foundations of the Roman Empire.

Boni allowed Lee access to the dig—February 27, 1902—to browse his excavation notes and photographs, and to examine the samples extracted from the Roman Forum. Like the archaeologist, Lee understands the importance of Rome as a centre of civilization and culture, and like him, remains fixed in this central location. However, in tension with this fixity of place is her writing style. Lee refuses to describe in full detail: she is playfully vague and ephemeral, like the titular *Spirit of Rome*. Lee relates to the reader the topographical and sub-topographical landmarks of Rome, but also, through a disjointed narrative style that attempts to replicate the spirit of the place; she attempts to relate a sense of place that will evoke in the reader an interest both in her experience and in the spatial memory conjured by the narrative. She writes in the preface to *The Spirit of Rome*:

TO ALL THE FRIENDS

³¹ Mary Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 26.

³² R. Ross Holloway, *The Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 23.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁴ Jeffrey A. Becker, ‘Giacomo Boni’, in *Encyclopaedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. C. Smith. (New York, NY: Springer, 2014), pp. 989-990 (p. 989).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 989.

LIVING AND DEAD
REAL AND IMAGINARY
MORTAL AND IMMORTAL
WHO HAVE MADE ROME
WHAT IT IS TO ME.³⁶

Lee is here alerting the reader to the presence of what her travel narratives are essentially interested in: a toast to the memory of ‘friends’ fixed spatially, and the reiteration, re-telling of those friendships in her geographical writings. Shaped on the page like a memorial urn, this inscription fixes the idea of Rome as an eternal city. The shape of the memorial vessel in Lee’s preface echoes those in the image directly below, and featuring Boni.



Figure 1, an example of a Roman Funerary Urn.³⁷

³⁶ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, preface.

³⁷ A Roman Funerary Urn (C14053) Courtesy of Cumming Museum.



Figure 2, Giacomo Boni at the Roman Forum (1904).³⁸

Lee's use of the perfect tense within this vessel, this literary trans-historic object—'who *have* made Rome what it *is*'—collects Lee's 'friends' together into one single present moment and image. The history of Rome, past, present and into the future, is immortalized. Yet there is a distinct divide: the friends are either the living (real and mortal) or the dead (imaginary and immortal). There is a symmetry to the urn: to the left the physical and real; to the right the ephemeral and extinct. As textual image upon the page, the urn suggests itself as the bringer of water (and thus life), as well as the carrier of the ashes of the deceased. It shifts temporally but not spatially; the living become the dead, as time progresses.

This idea of the fragment, in this case the dedicated urn, as a portal that shifts historical time, or that acts as the stimulus for previous memories, is a notion to which Lee repeatedly returns throughout her writing. Athena Vrettos discusses the fragment (specifically clothing) in relation to Lee's fantastic tales; through speculative theories of memory the fragment becomes a site of 'powerful experiences and emotions' that leave

³⁸ Eva Tea, *Giacomo Boni nella Vita del suo tempo* (Milano: Ceschina, 1932), p. 56.

‘permanent psychic traces on both the mind and the world’.³⁹ Vrettos’s article provides clear evidence of Lee’s use of stratigraphy beyond her works concerned with the geological and geographical. It is the fragment within the trenches of the archaeological site which Lee visited in spring 1902 that opened up her Roman encounter to the potential for a wider historical, textual and mnemonic experience. The vessel also becomes a portal to a historical event: on the morning of March 20, 1904 Boni excavated (in the presence of the King of Italy and a journalist from *The Times* ‘five archaic vessels deposited in a travertine block’.⁴⁰ That this image of the vessel below is called to mind, or suggested, before the reader encounters the excavation of ‘The Excavations’ is an indicator of the way in which Lee refuses to maintain a temporal linearity within *The Spirit of Rome*. The vessel is an anachronistic fragment, an artefact discovered before the dig.

‘The Excavations’ begins:

In the Forum this morning with Coss. B. and the excavator Boni. In the Director’s shed a “campionario”, literally pattern sheets of the various strata of excavation: bits of crock, stone, tile, iron, little earthenware spoons for putting sacrificial salt in the fire, even what looked like a set of false teeth. Time represented thus in space. And similarly with the excavations themselves: century under century, each also represented by little more than foot-prints, bases of gone columns, foundations of rough edifices. Among these neatly-dug-out layers of nothingness, these tidy heaps of chips with so few things, stand out the few old column-and-temple-ends which Piranesi already drew.

It is at this point in the chapter where Lee evokes the Uniformitarian maxim ‘the present is key to the past’:

I felt very keenly that the past is only a creation of the present. Boni, a very interesting and ardent mind, poetical and mystical, showed us things not really of this earth, not really laid bare by the spade, but existing in the realms of fantastic speculation, shaped by argument, faultlessly cast in logical moulds. Too faultlessly, methought, for looking at the mere heaps of architectural rubbish, let alone the earth, the various vegetations which have accumulated on it, I had a sense of the infinite intricacy of all reality, and of the partiality and insufficiency of the paths, which our reason (or our fancy in the garb of reason) cuts into it. Rituals and laws whose meaning had become mere shibboleths two thousand years ago, races whose very mien and aspect (often their language) can only be speculated on: all this reappears, takes precision and certainty.⁴¹

³⁹ Athena Vrettos, “‘In the clothes of dead people’: Vernon Lee and Ancestral Memory”, *Victorian Studies* 55: 2 (Winter 2013), 202-211 (p. 202).

⁴⁰ Albert J. Ammerman, ‘On the Origins of the Forum Romanum’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 94: 4 (October, 1990), 627-645 (p. 630).

⁴¹ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, pp. 141-2. My italics.

Here, Lee contemplates the essence of Rome. The site of the dig, and the chapter ‘The Excavations’ itself, are anachronistic spaces. The archaeological site reveals a tangible, physical example of historical and geological time located in space. As we drop through the strata, discussed by Lee and documented in Boni’s campionario (sheet plans of the site), we go back into the geological record and the temporal past. The precision of Boni’s site and its replication in the pattern sheets was assisted by his military methods; he used the Italian army’s *Brigata Specialisti* balloon with which to photograph and draw the site from 400 metres above the ground.⁴² These planimetric photographs enabled Boni to survey the whole site, whilst also viewing the stratified soil of the dig.⁴³ Furthermore, this allowed the archaeological fragments to be seen as part of the stratified layer, in situ, as well as a solitary fragment removed from the earth. Whilst no direct evidence has surfaced of Lee being aware of Boni’s balloon methodology, there are echoes of his vantage point in Lee’s own description of the vista. In considering her view of Rome from her room in the Palazzo Orsini in the chapter ‘Palazzo Orsini, Formerly Savelli’, for example, Lee looks down on the cityscape and is filled with delight. Yet her survey is essentially at odds with Boni’s:

The first evening when I came into my room, the sunset streaming in, the lights below, it was fantastic and overwhelming. What I said of this being a unique moment in Roman history—the genius of the city stripped of all its veils, visible everywhere, is especially true about the view from this window. During my childhood Rome was closed, uniform, without either the detail or the panoramic effects which speak to the imagination; and ten or fifteen years hence the great gaps will be filled up, and the deep historical viscera, so to speak, of the city closed and grown together.⁴⁴

This birds-eye view looks onto the viscera of Rome, that which lies beneath the superficial. The archaeological work around the Forum would have been visible to Lee from the Palazzo, and perhaps it is this that has de-veiled the city, stripping back its layers, opening up the panorama to her imagination. But for Lee, there is also a counter-process in action: the gaps are being ‘filled up’ both literally; replacing the earth back after the dig, and in knowing; the archaeologist is able to fill the gaps in our historical understanding of the people and cultures once resident in the city.

⁴² Holloway, p. 27.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 23-27.

⁴⁴ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, pp. 122-23.

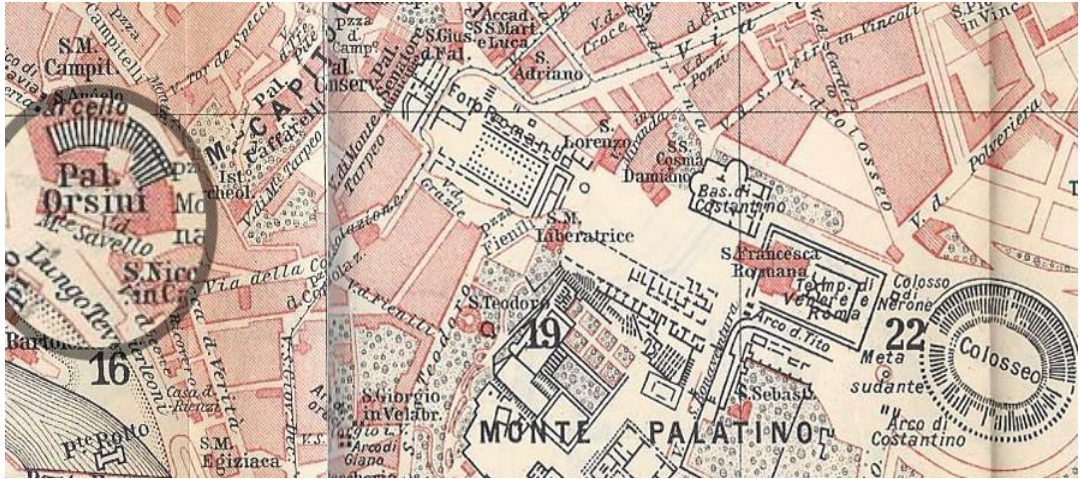


Figure 3, Map of the Roman Forum in 1900 with the Palazzo Orsini highlighted.⁴⁵

Around the period of Lee's visit in 1902, Boni began to 'Sterro della Sacra Via presso l'arco di Tito'.⁴⁶ Lee's date of the journal entry, February 27, 1902 suggests another temporal ambiguity: is it the date of Lee's visit to the site or subsequent journal writing-up of events? The site is visited within the text on multiple occasions, and there is a clear structure of stratification: the first physical visit, the journal reminiscences, the text for publication, the text as read by Lee's reader. Lee is not only giving us geological strata within the Forum site—the excavations of the Arch of Titus—but she is also causing the reader to excavate the temporal layers and non-linear spaces within the text and create a narrative from the vague fragments. Lee manages to draw our attention, via a textual reproduction, to a disorientation that occurs at the archaeological site which provides an analogy for our experiences: where space (and place) become (or represent) historical time. Through this use of temporal layers, and the disparity between individual reader's knowledge and memories of Rome, Lee gives the reader room to make 'The Excavations' a personal as well as a shared narrative. Lee's preface—an inscription to the sacred ghost gods—gives thanks for all that has made 'Rome | What it is to me [Lee]', yet she also provides a textual space in which historic, cultural and social differences allow Rome to become 'what it is' for each and every reader, and to alert the reader to the existence of these dynamics.

⁴⁵ Karl Baedeker, *Italy: Handbook for Travellers, Second Part: Central Italy and Rome, with 11 Maps, 46 Plans, A Panorama of Rome, A View of the Forum and Romanum, and the Arms of the Popes since 1417* (London: Dulau and Co., 1900). Extract from map of 'Roma'.

⁴⁶ Charles Huelsen, *Il Foro Romano Storia E Monumenti* (Roma: Ermanno Loescher & Co., 1905), p. 46. 'excavate the sacred way near the arch of Titus'. My translation. This site is to the left of the *Colosseo* in the above map.

‘Recent Discoveries in the Forum’: Boni

The publication date of *The Spirit of Rome* (1906), and the date which Lee suggests is the date of the visit to the Forum site (1902) span a four-year period. In between the dates of Lee’s journal entry and publication of the book of essays, Boni’s own article ‘Recent Discoveries in the Forum’ was published by *Harper’s Magazine* in March 1903. Both Boni’s article and Lee’s short story ‘In the Tuscan Maremma’ were included in the *Harper’s Monthly* December 1902–May 1903 edition. Boni’s article presents the evolving archaeological undertaking at the Roman Forum, from his appointment in 1898, up until the present time. He states his aim as being less about the discovery of new archaeological remains, and being concerned with understanding the fragments and their place in ancient civilization. Boni does this by repeatedly asking questions—to a nameless bureaucratic entity controlling the Forum—but the answer is only forthcoming after his own enquiries, based upon his previous archaeological experience. Lee’s ‘The Excavations’ clearly assimilates contextual elements of Boni’s ‘Recent Discoveries in the Forum’. The splendid basin found by Boni at the Springs of Juturna is ‘under ten feet of human excrement, choked up with fragments of a marble group of Greek statuary’.⁴⁷

Lee’s version notes:

What struck me [...] was that the once tank of Juturna, round whose double springs Rome must have arisen to drink and worship [...] has been fouled by human privies so deeply that years of dredging and pumping will be required to restore its purity.⁴⁸

Lee uses this artefact as a symbol to suggest the foul soiling of Roman civilization: perhaps by her predecessors, perhaps by the archaeologists which ascribe their creative speculations to the fragmentary remains of that civilisation.

Boni’s ‘Recent Discoveries in the Forum’ begins his article with a quotation from Livy:

To sharpen the mind for the investigation of the life and customs of the early Romans, so as to discern with what manner of men and of means, on hearth and battle-field, the power of Rome came to birth and waxed mighty [...]

These words of Livy aptly define the duty of those privileged to turn the pages of the great book that lies open in the Roman Forum. Torn, soiled,

⁴⁷ Giacomo Boni, ‘Recent Discoveries in the Forum’, *Harper’s Monthly*, December 1902 -May 1903, 626-633, (p. 630).

⁴⁸ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, pp. 142-43.

and incomplete, the book yet offers precious knowledge to minds which approach it in reverence and ponder its half-articulate lessons.⁴⁹

The ‘great book’ of Boni’s Forum is altered by Lee, but still present in ‘The Excavations’ as the campionario or sheets of the strata of the dig. Both Lee and Boni, whilst viewing the archaeological site in textual terms, also consider the fragmentary offerings of the Forum in their narratives. For Lee, it is the ‘bits and ‘heaps’, for Boni, it is the rather more grandiose incompleteness of ‘precious knowledge’. And while Boni approaches the Forum with reverence and Lee considers the site a heap of architectural rubbish, both find the archaeological dig at the Forum an educational and enlightening experience. Lee’s writing suggests a transcendence through time which refuses to be demarked by the stratified layers in the archaeological dig:

I had a sense of the infinite intricacy of all reality, and of the partiality and insufficiency of the paths, which our reason (or our fancy in the garb of reason) cuts into.⁵⁰

Yet, whilst the narrative attempts to escape its temporal constraints, it also pinpoints, paradoxically, the apparent exact moments of narration through the journal entries dated in the text. In this respect, there are parallels between Lee and the archaeologist. Boni attempts not to escape the constraints of time but to organize them through geological study, to ‘turn the pages’ of the ‘great book’ of the Forum, to complete the history of Rome that Livy found so formidable to write. Perhaps the latent architect in Boni is attempting to re-construct the fallen Rome. However, this passage recognizes that there are limits to imagination and reason, and that limitation is our own lived experience. Trying to complete the history of the Forum is unachievable because our own reality, never mind the reality of ancient Rome, is impossible to fully comprehend. Boni writes of Livy:

son of the Venetian province, born fifty-eight years before the current era, was overawed by the immensity of the task of writing 700 and more years of the history of Rome.⁵¹

The imposing scale of Livy’s work *Ab Urbe Condita Libri* is echoed in the enormity of the task of excavating the Roman Forum (142 books, from the founding of Rome, to the rule of Augustus).⁵² Boni’s key to unravelling the complexities of the Forum’s remains is

⁴⁹ Boni, p.626.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.626.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.626.

⁵² Estimated at between 64BC and 12 A.D., by Ronald Syme, *Livy, Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, ed. by Christina Shuttleworth Kraus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.

scientific investigation. Lee on the other hand, is confident of the insufficiency of the sciences, or of 'reason', to understand the 'infinite intricacies of all reality'. Lee is happy to remain mystified by the archaeological remnants; she allows her imagination and memory to shape them into a version of the past, and is open to other accounts of the past created by other visitors to the site. Boni's study begins by referencing a form of immutability derived not from the natural laws and cycles of the earth, but from a textual source: the documents of the past enable the archaeologist to speculate on the artefacts of the past. The remnants of the Republic found in the excavations by Boni are unlocked by a literary key: historical documents, like Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*. Yet this too is problematic: whilst Boni's historical source material appears a more supported form of speculation on the Forum's artefacts, Livy's own work—which preceded him by seven-hundred years—was itself speculative. His work often filled in the gaps of Roman history, relying on oral tradition and mythology, where documentation was lacking. Indeed, Livy's preface to Book I suggests that the earliest histories of Rome are more fit for the poet than the historian, and that he has 'no intention of establishing either their truth or their falsehood'.⁵³

Lee and Boni's texts both exploit parallel methodologies when considering the archaeological site and its remains: methodologies that stress instinct as well as reason. Boni writes in *Harper's* that his research 'proceeds as much by intuition as by reasoned hypothesis'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, their opinions accede on another key element: spirit of place. Boni in his article in *Harper's*, also installs the idea of the 'genius loci':

When in the autumn of 1898 opportunity afforded to begin serious examination of the Forum, the problem that arose in my mind was less how to discover new archaeological remains than how to evoke the *genius* of the place and to make its dry bones live.⁵⁵

Boni attempts to evoke, to induce the spirit of the past and awaken what was once living, to re-create, to re-animate the past. By awakening the spirits, he will complete the missing fragments of Roman history whilst assuming a quasi-mystical position. Lee echoes this sentiment in the 'Postscript' to *The Spirit of Rome*. She writes:

Yesterday morning while looking through, with a view to copying out, my Roman notes of the last eighteen years, I felt, with odd vividness, the various myselfs who suffered and hoped while writing them. And, even more, I felt the presence of the beloved ones who, unmentioned, not

⁵³ Livy, *The History of Rome: Book I*, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1905), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Boni, p. 627. Boni also follows 'intuitively in the track of Caesar' (p. 628).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 627. My emphasis.

even alluded to, had been present in those various successive Romes of mine. All of them have changed; some are dead, others were never really living. But while I turned over my note-books, there they were back.⁵⁶

Boni's key—the present—enables him to speculate upon the fragmentary evidence of past Roman civilization, and reawaken the dry bones from their repose. For Lee, the recall of beloved presences is multifaceted and undefined: Lee has multiple 'myselfs' in 'successive Romes'. Boni's complete and linear history of the Roman Forum is broken once more into the stratified layers of Lee's experience.

Lee's 'The Excavations' absorbs and manipulates the influence of both Hutton/Lyell's phrase and Boni's article, using both geological and archaeological terminology and structures within an intensely personal travel narrative. But Lee's 'present' is not, as the Uniformitarians suggest, a 'key' to understanding, but a 'creation', a synthesis of a past that may or may not have existed. In this way, we see a difference of opinions between the Uniformitarian geologist and the archaeologist Boni: Lee is not only in discourse with the geologist and Boni in *The Spirit*, but is bringing them into discourse with one another. Boni is concerned with evoking a cultural past, reconstructing a living history, making the 'dry bones live', an act of creativity similar to Lee's own response to the excavations. Boni re-animates the past, yet for Lee time appears cyclical. The past has evolved, natural cycles have taken over, the man-made edifices and temple stones have returned back to the earth from whence they were exhumed, the ruins of Rome have become the 'mere heaps of architectural rubbish' which are draped with an 'accumulation' of 'various vegetations', through which Lee envisages 'the infinite intricacy of all reality'.⁵⁷

During 'The Excavations', Lee contemplates Boni's creative analytical skills; his methodology lies between the reasoned and empirical 'key' that Lyell requires for understanding the geological past, and Lee's creative and personal engagement with the fragments of the Forum. The 'fantastic speculations' of the excavator Boni become 'faultlessly cast in logical moulds': he (like Lyell) uses the theory of immutable constancy as a structure for his narrative of the past, rebuilding, from experience, a civilization from bones and legend. In combining excavation of the necropolis, alongside experimentation with 'the clay in which the tombs were embedded', and in considering Roman funeral rites, Boni is able to 'throw light' on 'the inner nature of the great people who so long

⁵⁶ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 204.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.

ruled the ancient world, and who in household, temple, and burying-ground' had an 'ever present' and 'deep sense of the unbroken harmony and unity underlying the ceaseless transformations of the Universal Energy'.⁵⁸ Boni conjures up archaeological narratives that, Lee states can initially 'only be speculated on' by the excavator, yet they later reappear she affirms, after consideration, with 'precision and certainty'.⁵⁹

Where Boni, in 'Recent Discoveries in the Forum' attempts to clarify his theories based on the fragmentary Roman remains, Lee's narrative of 'The Excavations' attempts to re-mystify the findings of the archaeological site. Lee gives us a verifiable date of her visit to the site, but clouds her journal entry with allusions and partial statements—'spoons for putting sacrificial salt in the fire', 'the few old column-and temple-ends'—not least, the near-hidden intertextual reference to Hutton/Lyell.⁶⁰ Counter to this, Boni's archaeological dig provides an example of the 'scholar's copy book': a diligent transposing of the archaeological fragment into the textual evidence of the *campionario*. Lee's allusions to her reading on both the Roman Forum and the geological sciences, exemplify a blurring of the same site. This deliberate lack of precision within her narrative dissimilates Lee's intellectual and literal journey to the excavation, and her textual other (Lee's journal to Boni's *campionario*) is representative of the mind as 'blotting-book'.

Boni presented to Lee what was thought—and later verified—to be the Comitium area of the Forum.⁶¹ Lee and the others in the group are shown 'bits' unearthed by Boni in the excavation which are non-specific: 'crock, stone, tile, iron'. Pieces such as 'little earthenware spoons' used to put 'sacrificial salt on the fire' are fragments that hint at previous pre-Christian civilization at the Forum. But unlike Boni, Lee is content to narrate only the vaguest fragments of past civilizations. Boni's article explains the importance of the site's sacrificial past, but Lee shields the reader from Boni's speculations merely providing the reader with examples of 'bases of columns, foundations of rough edifices'.⁶² These narrative gaps introduced by Lee consciously mask Boni's detailed descriptors:

I found portions of an imperial building with pierced walls, which seems to show it to have been a guard house – an important particular, which would go to confirm the hypothesis that the entrance to the Forum stood here.⁶³

⁵⁸ Boni, p. 633.

⁵⁹ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 142.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.

⁶¹ Holloway, p. 86.

⁶² Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 141.

⁶³ Boni, p. 632.

Lee is only partially narrating events. If we are to consider Lee's mention of the 'few old column-and-temple-ends' that are 'speculated on' in *The Spirit of Rome*, we might reasonably predict that Lee is discussing the Roman Forum (1906). And we would get a sense that this is the same Forum Boni discusses in his article (1903), and the Forum site where Boni entertained Lee as his guest (1902). Yet we are not certain: Lee allows us space to imagine, we are given room to make our own inferences as reader. The gaps within Lee's narrative allow for an ambiguity of meaning, an ambiguity that Boni is attempting to eradicate. He is desirous to fill in the gaps of the 'torn, soiled and incomplete book' of Roman history and culture, he aims to position himself as an expert, able to read and translate the palimpsestic layers of the Forum for the layperson. The completeness of his scientific narrative reiterates the 'precision and certainty' which Lee finds at odds with her narration of the present moment as inhabited by elements of the past. The fragments of 'open work roof ornament[s] of the seventh century' Boni discusses in his article becomes Lee's fragment of 'tile'.⁶⁴ Lee dismantles the 'tidy heaps of chips' Boni 'faultlessly cast[s]' into an archaeological theory and subtly reworks them into a mythic and fragmentary narrative she considers suitable for the genesis of the Roman state. In 'The Excavations', Lee is achieving with her narrative what she later fully realizes in *The Golden Keys* (1925): an enhancement of the present moment by engaging with the fragments of the past, whilst also doing justice to the complexity of that experience by retaining it *as* fragments. She writes that 'the shrinking present and future can be replenished from the heaped up past; and turned 'into a more real presence in our spirit'.⁶⁵ In attempting to recreate and reanimate early Roman civilization, Boni negates the present and the personal. Lee, fundamentally, is focused on the personal in both the present and future states in her narration, and the elements of the past become inspiration for expanding her experience of the present. Lee questions the legitimacy of collating historic fragments to cast them into a perfect—yet highly subjective—rendering of the past; an act she finds Boni guilty of in his attempt to repair the 'great book' of the Roman Forum. In her final paragraph of 'The Excavations', Lee narrates the experience of another visitor to the site, 'a man who took no interest [...] none in the significance of rituals, symbols, or the laws of racial growth and decadence. He wanted to be shown the place where Caesar had fallen; he was a survivor of the old school of historical interest'.⁶⁶ Lee ends with the question 'but is not this old-fashioned interest in half-imaginary

⁶⁴ Holloway, p. 62.

⁶⁵ Lee, *The Golden Keys*, p. 18.

⁶⁶ Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 143.

dramatic figures as legitimate as our playing with races, rituals, the laws, the metaphysical essence of the past?⁶⁷ Both facets of this historical past exist only in juxtaposition with the present, as a creation of the present, with neither any closer to replicating historic Rome.

A ‘Fair Idea’

Lee’s copy of Hugh Robert Mill’s *The Realm of Nature: An Outline of Physiography* (1908) is part of the collection at the Harold Acton Archive. This work is concerned with promoting the emerging scientific discipline of physiography. Physiography, Mill reminds the reader, encompasses the disciplines of geology, astronomy, geography, meteorology, biology and chemistry.

In a period in which Anne Dewitt notes there was a movement towards ‘professionalization [...] specialization, delimitation, and exclusivity’ in the sciences, Mill’s discipline of physiography bucked this trend.⁶⁸ He turns his lens from the microscopic to the panoramic when he suggests ‘Physiography means literally the description of Nature [...] Nature means all creation; not only all created things but the changes they undergo’.⁶⁹ Mill sees physiography as an important addition to human knowledge because of the examination of the interrelation of the sciences, and the application of this to ‘the world we live in’.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 143

⁶⁸ Anne Dewitt, *Moral Authority, Men of Science, and the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 11.

⁶⁹ Hugh Robert Mill, *The Realm of Nature: An Outline of Physiography* (London: John Murray, 1908), p. 1. Harold Acton Archive VL 550 MIL.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. v.

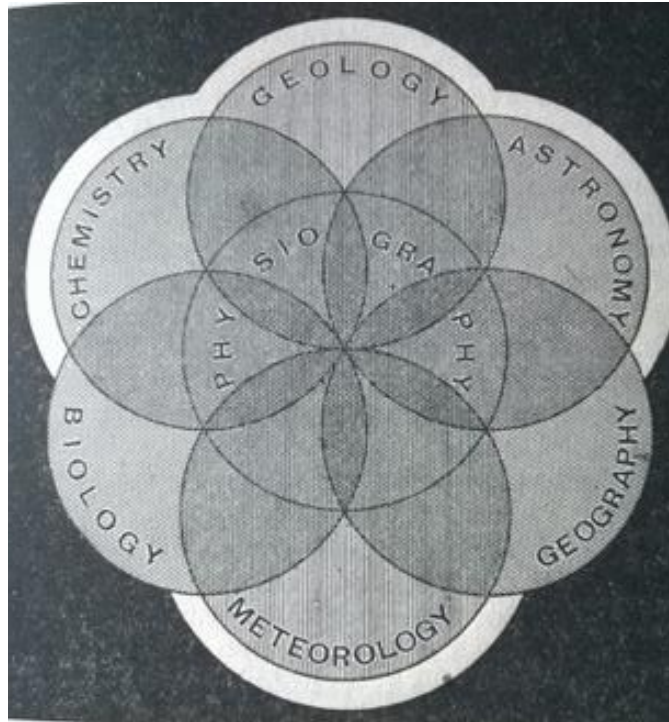


Figure 4, Mill's illustration of physiography.⁷¹

Where Mill's new innovative discipline falls somewhat short is in its arguments for physiography to be considered scientific discipline in its own right. This is via a methodology of inductive and deductive reasoning which paradoxically contradicts his earlier empirical stance. For example, Mill suggests in his preface that physiography is a 'consistent system of the universe developed from a few simple general principles, the truth of which, must be assumed'.⁷² However, Mill also suggests that the physiographer must make a break from the creative and the emotional response to geographical surroundings, something Lee discussed in the published version of 'The Excavations' two years prior to the publication of Mill's work. In the chapter 'The Study of Nature' Mill presents a definitive gloss of a scientific description: it 'should be as free as possible from all subjective colouring; a mountain must not be described as vaguely impressive in its grandeur or beautiful in its colouring, but in its height, the angle of its slopes, the nature of its rocks'.⁷³ He continues with an argument that attempts a confusing rephrasing of the need for scientific empiricism: a 'breakdown of [the] subjective and objective': subjective things are 'not-real' and form no part of physiography. Yet, going

⁷¹ Ibid., illustration from p. 19. Harold Acton Archive VL 550 MIL.

⁷² Ibid., p.1.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

against his own physiographic empiric manifesto, Mill's description of stratification utilizes a simile which echoes that of Boni's great book of the Roman Forum. Mill writes:

The stratified rocks are like the sheets of an unbound book, some of which have been printed over a second time with a later part of the work; many have been crumpled, torn, and rubbed so they are illegible; the numbering of all the pages except the last one has been destroyed, and there are evidently places where several places together have dropped out. By reading the legible portions of such a book one could find hints of the development of events if the mutilated work were a history, or of the unfolding of the plot of a novel. A few consecutive pages found in their proper order would give a *key* to arranging the rest, and although uncertainty as to the precise sequence of some parts of the narrative would remain, the patient reader could in time obtain a fair idea of the nature and order of contents.⁷⁴

The most recent page is the only one left in its entirety, and it is only through understanding the 'legible portions' of consecutive pages that the key be revealed, and the narrative be worked out. But similarly to Lee, and dissimilarly to Boni, Mill does not expect a full and legible account to be discerned from the torn, rubbed and crumpled pages. In fact he appears to be content with a 'fair idea'. Mill's quote above is a less succinct way of describing Uniformitarianism's/Hutton's notion of the present as key to the past, the narrative of the stratified rocks can be pieced together using observation and deduction. Yet, there are aspects of Mill's philosophy which likewise have parallels with Lee's own thoughts on maintaining fragmentation, or showing the interconnectedness of non-consequential layers.

In Lee's copy of Mill's text at the archive, she notes in the front inside cover: 'p.110 Dust and spray presumably also'.⁷⁵ This personal index note relates to a section on dust which Lee had marked in pencil:

Terrestrial dust is carried into the atmosphere by ascending currents of air and is of many kinds, resulting from the wearing down of rocks, from volcanic explosions, from flowers in the form of pollen, from minute organisms either plants or animals, from burning fuel, from factories, mines, flour-mills, and from the spray of the sea.⁷⁶

The particles of dust, disparate in origin but collectively entering the atmosphere, provide a connection to an example of a discipline from Mill's illustration of physiography (see Figure 4). Geology and geography are represented by the particles from rock erosion and volcanic explosions, biology by pollen and minute organisms, chemistry in the form of

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 264. My italics.

⁷⁵ Ibid., flyleaf.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

burning fuel. Lee's marking of the section in pencil suggests that she found this illustration of multidiscipline of interest.

A multidisciplinary approach to scientific writing and reading was certainly utilized by Patrick Geddes, with whom Lee found a comradeship of thought. Geddes was most notably a geographer, but also a town planner, sociologist and biologist and owner of the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh. Geddes met Lee in April-May 1910, and the pair were in correspondence for a short period (perhaps ending when Lee sent him a copy of Richard Semon's work, see Chapter I). In Geddes's first letter to Lee in May 1910, he writes how he was 'glad' to meet her and looks forward to a 'more leisured discussion' in July that year. This letter was accompanied by a selection of reading for Lee which included his biological studies and his syllabi for his university courses: 'One of "Country and Town", also of "Survey Cities"'. Geddes notes to Lee that he always has 'the same endeavour to observe and interpret alternatively'.⁷⁷

Geddes's methodology of observation and interpretation in the context of geography allows for an individual's subjective comprehension of an object: Geddes's Outlook Tower in Edinburgh is the epitome of this method. Unlike Mill who believes subjective is simply 'not-real', Geddes actually uses this as his scientific framework. In his second letter to Lee, after a meeting between the pair in London in July, Geddes begins to teach Lee his 'bookcase method' for scientific learning, across multiple disciplines. This is essentially a way of collating (in this case evolutionary theory) the:

good abstracts of recent evolutionary literature & from these you will see how new schools are arising out of the increasingly psychological output, "vitalisms", "psycho-vitalisms", "psycho-Lamarckism".⁷⁸

This will then provide for Lee 'the main generalization of the science, in their historic origins' and provide the thought barring its limitation. Geddes then states that 'in an hour or two you can visualize the essential library of a science & then its main outlines'.⁷⁹ Finally, Geddes suggests that he hopes to make these ideas clear to Lee when she attends his diagram workshop. Significantly, he asks:

Do you appreciate maps, geologic sections, historic charts? Or globes, relief models? Or the keyboard or stops of an organ? I want you to begin with whichever is least uncongenial to you & I should like to try whether I can not in an hour or two give you such *keys and master-keys* as I possess, to the world of biology at any rate.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee, May 5, 1910. Somerville College Archives.

⁷⁸ Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee, July 1910. Somerville College Archives. Geddes's underlining.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. My italics. Geddes's underling.

Once again, it is a key that is given which enables the discipline to be unlocked. In this instance, it is the use of geographic, geologic and archaeological models that become a multidisciplinary tool to understanding biological knowledge. Geddes's use of cartographical models as a key with which to teach Lee biology is something she repurposes in *The Handling of Words*: 'I have sometimes recommended to young writers that they should draw diagrams, or rather maps, of their essays and stories'.⁸¹

The penultimate letter in this short series begins with Geddes addressing Vernon Lee, not Miss Paget. He writes that he and Miss Paget had 'all sorts of difficulty in understanding one another's vocabulary & way of using it,' (it would appear Geddes, Lee and Semon are at odds in the way in which they utilized terminology) and that they 'spent so much discussion on our respective approaches and side interests' that they 'did not get to our destinations'. But, he adds, he has 'just had a most satisfactory morning's truancy from work to read your [Vernon Lee's not Miss Paget!] volume'.⁸² The volume was presumably Lee's most recent work *Laurus Nobilis: Chapters on Art and Life*, 1909.

The letter then discusses Geddes's next project: the renovation of Crosby Hall on behalf of University College London. Geddes's plan incorporates cloisters in the basement of the building, on the ground floor a hall fit for 'various exhibitions & functions, civic, historic' and above this the 'Music Gallery'. On the final floor, Geddes envisions 'the library [...] Not an ordinary library (this is beyond our means & beneath our aim in a way) but a small special library of literature, distinctly utopian, in the best sense (utopian & other) of that often-ill-used word (e.g. including *Laurus Nobilis*)'.⁸³ Geddes then asks Lee to think of the storeys of the hall in a 'vertical section one above the other'. In the illustrated page from Geddes's letter on the left-hand page there is a sketched tower-like shape: the first level is labelled 'meditation' and 'thought', the second, the Hall of associated public and civic life is to inspire 'deed therefrom'. The third level, the Music Gallery sets the students 'beyond the deed the higher dream of music' and the fourth, the Library of Utopia is to take the students 'beyond this even the accumulated imagination of all the noblest hope & thought however as yet unrealisable'.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923), p. 8.

⁸² Patrick Geddes to Vernon Lee, July 14, 1910. Somerville College Archives.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

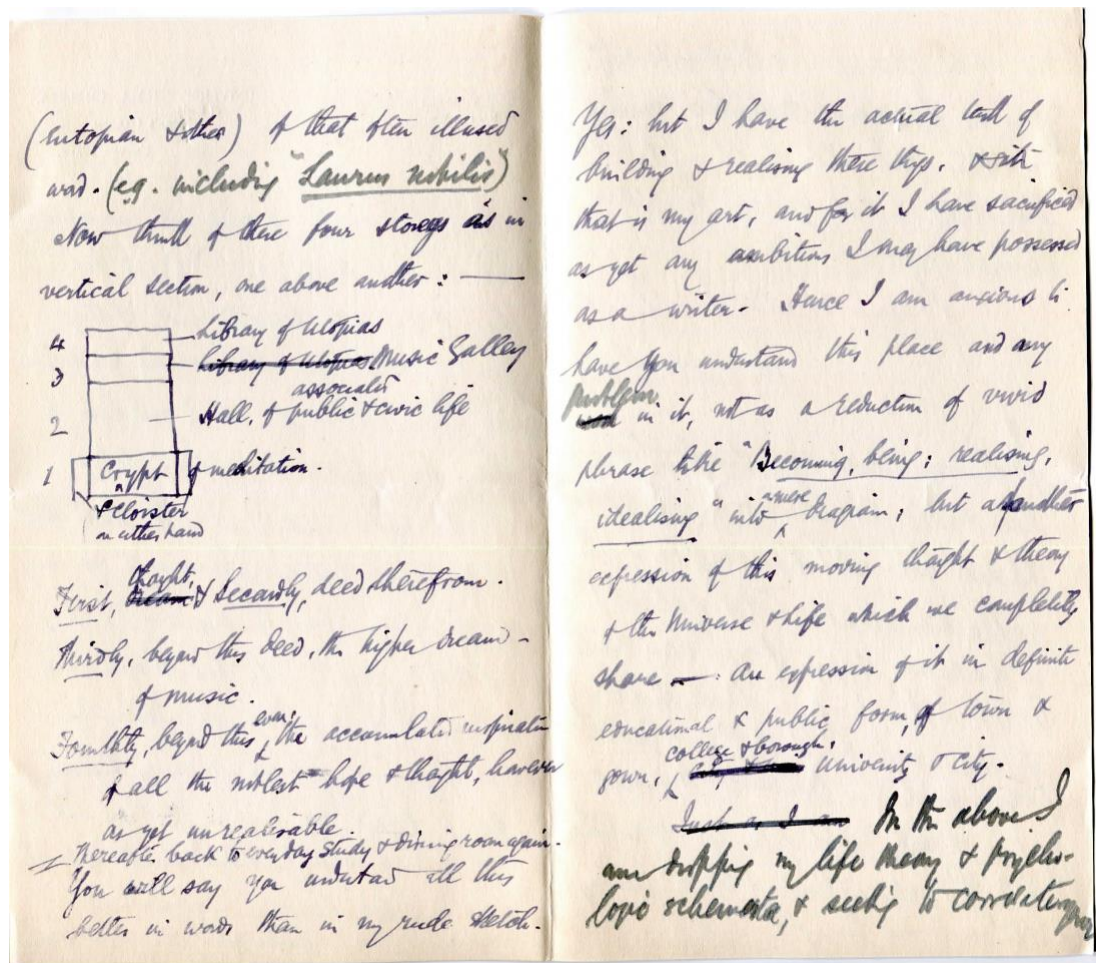


Figure 5, pp. 6-7 of Geddes' letter to Lee, July 14, 1910.⁸⁵

The pen sketch (see Figure 5) attempts to illustrate the impact of space on humanity, and sees Geddes render it as an expression or 'another confession of this moving thought & theory & the universe & life which we [Geddes and Lee] completely share'.⁸⁶ The vertical structure of the Hall is evident, in particular the distinct separation of living and working quarters which provide a parallel to the stratified development of the mind to its higher, Utopian form.⁸⁷ The layers here bring together the strata of Boni's dig, the multi-disciplinary approach of Mill, and the surveying framework of Geddes. Each use a present-day position to search below (whether it's in the case of Boni, around in the case of Mill, and from above in the case of Geddes) to complete the knowledge of the lower—temporal and spatial—strata by the use of reason gleaned from present day experience. Geddes's sketch of the Hall, seen in a vertical section with three floors above ground looks distinctly like a tower.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Courtesy of Somerville College Archives.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Figure 3., pp. 6-7 of Geddes's letter to Lee, July 14, 1910.

Lee's 'The Tower of the Mirrors' (1914) from the essay collection of the same name begins with the creation of a parallel between that of Geddes's Outlook Tower and Virgil's tower near Tarpeian Rock.⁸⁸ In reality, Geddes's tower began its life as Short's Observatory, a 'museum of scientific curiosities', one of which was the camera obscura in the 'castellated tower', which Hilary Fraser and Nick Burton note in their article 'Mirror Visions and Dissolving Views', was acquired by Geddes in 1892.⁸⁹ Whilst Burton and Fraser consider the tower in relation to aesthetics, 'panoptical technologies of surveillance' and 'the context of late Victorian visuality', they are not primarily interested in the interplay between Geddes and Lee's scientific philosophies.⁹⁰

Lee writes:

I have always been fond of that story of Virgil... how he built for himself a tower—whose name survives in a church at Rome—with mirrors whereby you could see whatever happened in the world's length and breadth. This Tower of the Mirrors I have seen at last with my mortal eyes.⁹¹

The tower of the essay is defined by its relation to its owner, it is 'Virgil's tower', 'Geddes's tower' or the 'geographer's tower'; suggesting immediately that the tower and the keeper are interdependent. Each tower cannot, should not, be thought of as an autonomous entity, the tower needs to be mediated, explained by Virgil: Geddes needs to provide a *key*. It is Geddes's 'geographer's tower' that provides an outlook for Lee, unlike Virgil's tower which is only to be seen at a distance—spatially and historically. Geddes's tower houses a camera-obscura from which Lee views the city of Edinburgh and the surrounding countryside. Lee's description of the view is lyrical. She watches as the hills 'subside from view', and are then replaced by 'weltering clouds' and a 'sudden crape of wind-driven rain'. The image then 'curdles' in the viewing glass of Geddes's tower.⁹² The surrounding landscape pulses in and out in waves of vision around the site. Lee does not note the hill's 'height' or 'angle' but watches as it ebbs from view. The description is fluid, the clouds are confused, and Lee's images are unstable (unlike the solid, angular mountain Mill describes). As she walks from the top level of the tower she explains:

We descended from the tower of the Mirrors, built by Virgil, as we know, to see all there is in the world. But not on the earth's surface only, nor on

⁸⁸ Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁹ Burton and Fraser, "Mirror Visions" and "Dissolving Views": Vernon Lee & Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower', p. 145.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 146.

⁹¹ Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, p. 1.

⁹² Mill, p.3.

this surface which we call the Present. Here our eye can penetrate through the dimensions of stellar space, and the dimensions also, the many-vista'd planes, of Time. On the tower-staircase hang huge globes, slung askew, as our world itself is.⁹³

Lee's visions are not only observations of Edinburgh and its surroundings, but visions of the universe that exist on other temporal and spatial strata. In this essay Lee seems to engage the ideas mediated through her experiences at Boni's excavation, and highlighted by her reading—in particular of Mill—to question the ways in which time and space work within a text.

What is interesting is that Lee's gaze towards the heavens is most focused as she moves down into the belly of the observation post. As she moves deeper down into the base of the Tower of the Mirrors, Lee's eye 'penetrate[s] through the dimensions of stellar space, and the dimensions also, [of] the many-vista'd planes, of Time'. The watchful essayist Lee escapes the boundaries of time and direction by moving *away* from Geddes's scientific instrument. Geddes's tower was designed as a tool to alter the way geographers and town planners looked at the relationship between town and country, and the camera obscura was a complex instrument which relied on lens, winch and mirror manufacture. But Lee's vision allows her the freedom of sight that does not require such mechanisms to focus on place, her 'mortal eye' is open to the universal. Lee is interested in the internal subjective sensations; the phenomena Mill describes as 'un-real' and 'no part of physiography'.⁹⁴ Lee converts the scientific arrangement of space, time and strata into a stratigraphic subjective experience which she had been exploring since 'The Excavations' with Boni. This 'world of interiority' shared by Geddes and Lee, and extended further by Lee, is discussed in their correspondence (July 14, 1910) and given a place within the tower. Burton and Fraser note that visitors to the tower were

encouraged to mediate upon and internalize in an individual way what they had seen and learned collectively, by spending a period of reflection in a darkened "inlook room" that contained only one chair, before descending the tower.⁹⁵

This enforced—and solitary—introspection separates Geddes's tower from Virgil's. Lee writes:

Moreover this Tower of the Mirrors can flash a symbolical meaning even into the metaphysical depths of being. The analogy thereof lets us guess

⁹³ Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp.5-6.

⁹⁴ Mill, p.3.

⁹⁵ Burton and Fraser, "Mirror Visions" and "Dissolving Views": Vernon Lee & Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower', p. 146.

at the universal mirrorings by which all outside things exist as we know them only in the reflecting and refracting mirrors of our memory and our emotions [...].⁹⁶

It is the interconnections between sense and memory, and the deep introspection considering them, that give the external world meaning.

Lee's vision in the viewing mirror in Geddes's Edinburgh tower is a vivid and distorted picture. Similarly to Boni and Mill's literary metaphors for the Earth's strata, Lee's metaphors represent the mimetic art of painting, layering strata of reality and mimesis. Lee likens the image from the camera to the masterpiece 'decorations in the École de Pharmacie' by Paul-Albert Besnard.⁹⁷ Besnard, another correspondent of Lee's, produced artworks which involved grand scale ideological paintings, which utilized the technical methods of the Impressionistic painters. Lee is attempting to write a historical and physiological narrative for the visions she sees from the viewing plate of the camera, but in layering over the image with such an explicitly emotive response to the geological tower. Lee creates a multi-disciplinary palimpsest, the actual environment of Edinburgh, represented by her description of the image in the mirror of the camera obscura, then moulded by her own emotive responses and memories, and re-written in a travel narrative essay. She writes:

And this place makes me think of those masterpieces of contemporary imaginative painting... not merely by the pale, flat washes of the camera-obscura and the steep plunging views over city and seaboard, but also because, even as by those marvellous paintings, we are given the emotions of *looking into the immense distances of geological ages*, when ice was melting from the shores of the great lakes, nay, when the first plant life arose from the subsiding sea's marshes.⁹⁸

The emotive response of Lee to the obscura, and the impressionistic use of her imagination to skip back to the primordial beginnings of life on earth, suggest Lee is in an act of active creation, unlike Boni and Mill who are reading the earth and the Forum for clues to its past. Lee's temporal fluidity, bounding over epochs—contemporary Edinburgh, Ice Age planet, primordial Earth—suggests that she is not interested in 'obtaining a fair idea' of the missing pages. But whilst she seems content to present fragments of the Earth's history to her reader, it is up to the reader to fill in the missing content and recreate those moments omitted from Lee's narrative essay. Lee is not

⁹⁶ Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, p. 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

speculating impressionistically about geological time: her essay is built on the intertextual foundations of scientific geological and archaeological theories. In expressing an emotive and imaginative response to Geddes's camera obscura, the reader feels a disparity between the transcendence of Lee and the specificity of Geddes's instrument of science. Yet Lee can only 'curdle' and 'welt' the scientific because she understands the objective reality of the geological sciences. She is able to use the 'reflecting and refracting mirrors' of her 'memory and emotions' to put the spirit back into its place.

Lee's writing on the stratification of the physical landscape and the textual topography of her essays bear strong similarities, each focusing upon fragments—archaeological and mnemonic—and using those as points for creating connections across and between multiple temporal and spatial points which themselves were built from the fragmentary strata of pre-existing earth sciences. Lee's methodology is both distinct from that of Boni, Mill and Geddes, and yet amalgamates them to create a personal approach. In transcending the stratified temporal and spatial laminae of the earth sciences within her texts, Lee is mirroring the ways in which historic and contemporaneous events are experienced simultaneously within the mnemonic recall. This hybridity—earth science mapping onto mnemonic theory—exemplifies Lee's blotting-book mind, so important to her textual rendering of the earth sciences.

Chapter III

Anthropology and the War Dance

Yet dance they did, chopping and slashing, blinding each other with squirts of blood and pellets of human flesh. And as they appeared and disappeared in the moving wreaths of firey [sic] smoke, they lost more and more of their original shape, becoming, in that fitful light, terrible uncertain forms, armless, legless, recognizable for human only by their irreproachable heads [...] until they became, with those decorous, well-groomed Heads, mere unspeakable hybrids between man and beast: they who had come onto that stage so erect and beautiful.¹

Vernon Lee, *The Ballet of Nations* (1915)

This chapter focuses upon Vernon Lee's interest in the science of human evolution and the development of primitive religion. These interests, and her reading in them, will be considered specifically in the context of mid- to late-nineteenth century anthropological and ethnological studies, and with regard to three of Lee's own works in particular: *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (1886), *Vital Lies: Studies of Some Recent Obscurantism* (1912) and *The Ballet of Nations* (1915 & 1920).

Critical engagement with *Baldwin* is fairly limited: Beatrice Corrigan's essay 'Vernon Lee and the Old Yellow Book' considers Lee's allusion to Robert Browning's character Caponsacchi (from his *The Ring and the Book*) as a character in *Baldwin*.² This use of Browning's character is also discussed by Vineta Colby in *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography*, along with consideration of the essays 'On Consolations of Belief', and 'The Responsibilities of Belief' and its relationship to Epicureanism.³ Patricia Pulham in *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (makes a brief reference to *Baldwin* in Chapter II— 'A White and Ice Cold World'—during which Pulham draws attention to Baldwin's reaction to the work of Gluck at the opera.⁴ Finally, Christa Zorn's *Vernon Lee* engages with *Baldwin* as a persona of Lee in 'Literary Form and Alternate

¹ Vernon Lee, *The Ballet of Nations* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915).

² Beatrice Corrigan, 'Vernon Lee and the Old Yellow Book', *Colby Library Quarterly*, 5: 6 (June 1960), 116-122.

³ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, MA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 53-54, 143-144, and, 64-65.

⁴ Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 31-32.

Subjectivity'.⁵ Critical engagement with Lee's *Vital Lies* is also scarce; Angela Leighton's *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of Word* briefly considers *Vital Lies* through Nietzsche, and Kirsty Martin's *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy* Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence briefly considers Lee's attack on vitalism's 'complacent reliance on the subjective experience'.⁶

Lee's pacifist work—*The Ballet of Nations* which she expands in 1920 into *Satan the Waster: A Philosophic War Trilogy with Notes and Introduction*—has received substantial critical scrutiny. The most notable of these critical works, Gillian Beer's 'The Dissidence of Vernon Lee', plays with ideas of empathy and group instincts, with Beer aligning Lee's Orchestra of the Passions with Wilfred Trotter's herd in *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916).⁷ Patricia Pulham's 'Violence and the Pacifist Body in Vernon Lee's *The Ballet of Nations*' suggests that Lee's interest in the Other fragments her own selfhood in which the body of the author becomes a metaphoric site of war.⁸ Nicoletta Pireddu's '*Satan the Waster: Peace and the Gift*' explores the relationship between art and the gift using the theory of Bataille to consider the symbolic economy of war.⁹ Grace Brockington's 'Performing Pacifism: The Battle between Artist and Author in *The Ballet of the Nations*' emphasizes the importance of *The Ballet's* illustrations, and the schism that opened up between Lee and the artist Maxwell Armfield.¹⁰ And Kristen Mahoney's 'Vernon Lee at the Margins of the Twentieth Century: World War I, Pacifism, and Post-Victorian Aestheticism' argues for an extension of aesthetic studies beyond the limits of the Victorian period, as works like *Satan the Waster* play 'a vital part in the processing of the traumas' of the twentieth century.¹¹ These examples primarily explore the relationship between pacifism and aesthetics, considering in the main the antagonism between *art for*

⁵ Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Ohio, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

⁶ Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 113. Kirsty Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy* Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 55-56.

⁷ Gillian Beer, 'The Dissidence of Vernon Lee: *Satan the Waster* and the Will to Believe', in *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, eds. Suzanne Raitt & Trudi Tate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 107-31.

⁸ Patricia Pulham, 'Violence and the Pacifist Body in Vernon Lee's *The Ballet of Nations*', in *Conflict, Nationhood and Corporeality in Modern Literature*, ed. P. Rau (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 46-63.

⁹ Nicoletta Pireddu, '*Satan the Waster: Peace and the Gift*', in *Dalla Stanza Accanto: Vernon Lee e Firenze settant'anni dopo*, eds. Serena Cenni e Elisa Bizzotto (Firenze: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 2006), pp. 270-84.

¹⁰ Grace Brockington, 'Performing Pacifism: The Battle between Artist and Author in *The Ballet of the Nations*', in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, eds. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 143-59.

¹¹ Kristin Mahoney 'Vernon Lee at the Margins of the Twentieth Century: World War I, Pacifism, and Post-Victorian Aestheticism', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 56: 3 (Jan 1, 2013), 313-42 (p. 337).

art's sake and Lee's anti-war stance.¹² With the imminent centenary of Lee's return to Villa il Palmerino in 1919, after World War I, and a subsequent conference to mark this anniversary in 2019, this area of her oeuvre seems likely to be subject to further consideration in the future.

Lee's formative years occurred during a transitional period within the development of the natural sciences. We have already seen how Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* had laid the groundwork for nineteenth century thinking using the stratigraphic method to expand the limits of pre-history. However, geology left an obvious gap: the history of the development of humanity within the environment that it charted. At the end of the nineteenth century, this gap was occupied by the emerging sciences of firstly ethnology, and secondly anthropology. It is through reference to both of these disciplines that I situate my reading of Lee's texts.

In considering Lee's interest in ethnology and anthropology, I will be drawing on theories of taboo, and relating this to a model of the transmission of social memory, hypothesized by the German physiologist Ewald Hering (1834-1918), and further developed by Semon in *Die Mneme* (1911). Hering's lecture 'On Memory as a Universal Function of Organized Matter', given at the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna, 1870 (and later translated by Samuel Butler in *Unconscious Memory*, 1880), argued in general that individuals have a 'primordial ability' to acquire characteristics, which will then in turn be passed on to the individual's offspring, should the individual reproduce.¹³ These characteristics include acquired memory traces, which provide learned behaviours of benefit to the individual or social group. How does this stratigraphical model then map on to taboo? Sigmund Freud's 1913 essay 'Totem and Taboo' posits that taboo can only exist within a society with an ambivalent attitude to a prohibited act; there must be a desire to transgress, and an unconscious repression to prevent the transgression. For the primitive individual, the taboo is forcibly proscribed to prevent an action driven by 'powerful human longings' which if acted upon would create a lack of stability within the tribe; and for the transgressor, the taint of uncleanness.¹⁴ The taboo acts similarly to Hering's acquired mnemonic characteristics: the memory of the prohibition is

¹² Brockington, p. 153.

¹³ Ewald Hering, 'On Memory as a Universal Function of Organized Matter', in *Unconscious Memory*, trans. Samuel Butler (London: A. C. Field, 1910), pp. 63-86 (p. 76).

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'Totem and Taboo', in *Totem and Taboo and Other Works: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIII* (1913-1914), trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), pp. 1-164 (p. 35).

internalized and remains unconscious until the desire to violate the taboo is aroused. But once the taboo has been triggered by an individual, the taboo can be passed through the community by social contact with the transgressor. In this way, the fear of taboo is passed stratigraphically through generations, or, as taboo, the contagion, spreading like a miasma through the tribe.

The late-eighteenth-century practice of ethnology—a study of groups or races by direct engagement with said group’s culture—was judged by a significant number to have lacked the empiricism of geological and archaeological study. With that in mind, in 1859 Paul Broca, a distinguished surgeon, anatomist and pathologist, created and standardized the new discipline of anthropology. To help further progress this science, Broca founded the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris in France, in 1859.¹⁵ After the success of Broca’s society, the Anthropological Society of London was founded in 1863 by James Hunt, an ethnologist and specialist in the treatment of stammering.

Hunt’s introductory address to the society on February 24, 1863 laid down the political, theological and ideological position of the newly-founded discipline. In contrast to what he saw as then-current ethnological practices, the Anthropological Society of London would, like its sister science geology, employ a method of enquiry based on *facts*.¹⁶ Whilst this may appear to the modern reader as something of a given, Hunt’s barbed critique was in reference to what he saw as the *hypothesis* of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, in his view a speculative proposition. Hunt proposed to the assembled society that:

We must make up our minds to give up all assumptions and theories, and remember that the great problem of Anthropology [sic] can only be settled by *facts*, and not by abstract logic. It may be that we shall have to wait for years before we shall get any true light as to the origin of Man: but we must abide our time.¹⁷

The Origin of Species was, Hunt argued, an example of an unobservable process, a form of abstract logic. Importantly, Darwin’s proposal of the *monogenic* origin of humankind was also at odds with Hunt’s and the wider members of the Anthropological Society of London and of Paris’s openness to *polygenic* origins for humanity.¹⁸ It was largely this

¹⁵ Anon, *Paul Broca of Paris Born, 1824. Died, 1880* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1880), p. 6.

¹⁶ James Hunt, ‘Introductory Address on the Study of Anthropology, Delivered Before the Anthropological Society of London, February 24th, 1863’, in *The Anthropological Review* (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), pp. 1-20 (p. 7).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17. ‘We shall always remember that even unity of species does not necessarily include unity of origin; and that with plurality of existing species, the *possibility* of the unity of origin cannot be denied.’

supposition of polygenism which fostered a form of scientific racism within the Society and thus within the origins of anthropology itself, albeit in a conflicted form. In his address, for example Hunt remarked:

I would therefore express a hope that objects of this Society will never be prostituted to such an object as the support of the slave-trade, with all its abuses; but at the same time we must not shrink from the candid avowal of what we believe to be the real place in nature, or in society, of the African or any other race.¹⁹

Hunt again turns to polygenism as a potential mediator between Christian doctrine and evolutionary theory when he suggests that the white European descended from the Biblical Adam, whilst allowing space for Darwin's hypothesis in the descent of (certain types of) mankind from apes.²⁰ 'The Africans' adherence to their own language, and system of beliefs is also reported by Hunt, via the first-hand observations of Consul J. T. Hutchinson, as incompatible with European Christian civility. Thus, the Anthropological Society's answer to fetishism, cannibalism, totemic belief and, most importantly, the taboo, is to study them, and dismiss them as primitive behaviours, making way for the colonizer's attempts to eradicate these beliefs from the collective social unconscious by prohibition, and replacement by Christian values.²¹

To what extent then, was Lee—only seven years old at the time of Hunt's address—aware of this science? She was reading work by Edward Burnett Tylor as early January 1875, at the age of nineteen. In a letter to her mentor Henrietta Jenkin, Lee confirms that she is 'reading a book by Tylor which [Jenkin] had recommended [...] some time ago'.²² Tylor was a professional anthropologist—firstly a reader, and then later a professor in the discipline at Oxford—but one who, in contrast to Hunt, engaged fully with Darwin's 'theoretical' observations on culture and ritual.²³ In the same letter, Lee discusses the positive influence her tutor Dr. Flasch had on her interest in the subjects of mythology, ancient art and archaeology. In Amanda Gagel and Sophie Geoffroy's

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

²¹ Whilst Hunt does not directly mention cannibalism and the taboo in his opening address to the Anthropological Society, the most eminent member of the group, and second speaker, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor completes a comprehensive study of these terms in *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881). Quoting from Consul Hutchinson in his *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), Hunt argues that though the Negro has mixed with European missionaries and English traders 'they cling to their gris-gris, jujus, fetichism and cannibalism with as much pertinacity as they did many hundred years ago [...] To attempt civilising such a race before they are humanized appears to me beginning at the wrong end' (pp. 40-44).

²² Vernon Lee letter to Henrietta Jenkin, January 28, 1875. Vernon Lee Archive, Miller Library, Colby College. *Vernon Lee: Letters Home*. 53. https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/letters_home/53.

²³ Tylor (1881), p. 152, 223.

collected edition of the letters, they speculate that Lee was reading either Tylor's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1878), or *Primitive Culture, Researches into the Development of Mankind, and the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Languages, Art and Customs* (1877): both published after the date of Lee's letter.²⁴ Lee could only have been reading *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* at this time, which Gagel and Geoffroy erroneously claim as being published in 1877 (it was published in 1865). Tylor's two volumes of *Primitive Researches* attempt to present a study of culture, or civilization, as a whole that diverge from the Anthropological Society—and James Hunt's—belief in the polygenic origins of humanity. This includes 'knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'.²⁵ Lee's copy of Osbert Crawford's *Man and His Past* (1921)—held at the British Institute—is essentially concerned with archaeology, but the fifth chapter engages explicitly with anthropology, suggesting that as a discipline it has become far too concerned with the 'primitive races'.²⁶ Crawford here argues for a move towards more interdisciplinary study, combining the research fields of archaeology, anthropology and history. Lee's 1921 edition of Crawford's *Man and His Past* has minor annotations, and includes an undated and anonymous review of the work from *The New Statesman* which has been cut out, folded, and placed within the leaves of the book. Crawford's work, *The New Statesman* argues, makes the reader pursue 'not only historical and anthropological tracks' but also 'material ones as are hidden in bog and heath'.²⁷ Lee marked an index on the inside front recto of the cover, which provides direction to page 183 in Crawford's text. Significantly, this page specifically engages with *superseded* scientific concepts. Crawford here notes that there is no value in 'examining the ancient and often discarded theories' of other scientists as a 'great deal that they wrote is useless to us, and consists merely of vague speculation'.²⁸ Crawford utilizes and promotes a sensory approach to archaeology, derived from Samuel Butler's work on the cultural development of primitive man, *Evolution Old and New*. Lee marks this in the margin with an exclamatory 'Butler!', perhaps at the unusual reference.²⁹ The archive also contains

²⁴ Vernon Lee, *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee, 1856-1935: Volume I, 1856-1884*, eds. Amanda Gagel, cont. ed. Sophie Geoffroy (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 186-9 (p. 188).

²⁵ Sir Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, Vol. I. (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 1.

²⁶ Osbert B. Crawford, *Man and His Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921). Harold Acton archive, VL 930.1 CRA. Lee finished reading Crawford's text July 30, 1921, as noted on the inside cover.

²⁷ Article inside cover of Osbert B. Crawford, *Man and His Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921). Harold Acton archive, VL 930.1 CRA.

²⁸ Crawford, p. 183.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Robert R. Marett's *Anthropology* (1912), a work quoted approvingly by Crawford as similarly arguing that anthropology should be interdisciplinary engaged with 'the whole study of man'.³⁰ Marett's *Anthropology* is unannotated by Lee, but like Crawford's work, it suggests a methodology for anthropological study in which geology plays an influential role: 'it is called the stratigraphical method, because it is based on the description of strata, or layers'.³¹ Crawford focuses on the distribution of pottery in layers (pp. 133-141) and the aspects of time and space to 'anthropogeography'.³² It is up to the anthropologist to uncover the remnants in the evolutionary layers, what Marett calls the 'leavings'.³³ There are structural parallels here with Hering's theories of acquired and inherited memory: the sporadic and disparate remnants act similarly to the latency of acquired memories unless subject to stimulus. This memory, be it in the individual, or in the tribal community like the taboo, enables humankind to adapt.

From the remaining evidence in the British Institute archive, Lee's opinions seem to side with those of ethnological study, rather than its more theologically and racially-minded modern descendant, anthropology. Lee's scientifically retrogressive act—the favouring of ethnology's monogenic position over anthropology's polygenic—is moral and humanitarian. The suggestion by early anthropologists such as Broca and Hunt regarding the separation of races supported colonial and slave narratives. Indeed, her relationship to anthropology is often one of questioning and critique, but some studies, such as Jane Harrison's anthropological study *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913), engaged Lee sufficiently—I will argue—to inspire the anti-war polemic *The Ballet of Nations* (1915). But firstly, I will tackle Osbert Crawford's anthropological bugbear: the historical tendency of mid- and late-Victorian anthropologists to focus on a polygenic belief that the 'primitive' races stand inherently distinct from the white Europeans. This involves drawing attention to the importance of Lee's own family tree, and the influence this may have had upon her understanding of monogenic inheritance.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

³¹ R. R. Marett, *Anthropology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), p. 32. Harold Acton Archive VL 398.09 MAR.

³² Crawford, p. 83. Lee heavily marks this section in the margins of the text with a double line.

³³ Marett, p. 35.

Adams Family Values

Peter Gunn provides little more than a short paragraph on Lee's ancestry; focusing on her maternal grandfather, and hinting at his involvement with the West Indian slave trade.³⁴ In drawing attention to Lee's ethnological and anthropological reading it is important to consider her own sense of her family's problematic legacy, and the ways in which she gradually (historically) distances herself from this taint, via her stressing of only the partial transmission of hereditary characteristics. Through the accumulation of family records, this chapter will climb back through the branches of the Adams family tree a further four generations, paying particular attention to the business interests of Lee's ancestors. Lee's mother, Matilda Adams (1815-1896) was the daughter of Edward Hamlin Adams (1777-1842), who was born in Jamaica, and who Gunn acknowledges to have been a rich man, coming from 'an old colonial family', 'with extensive business interests in the West Indies, including a banking house in Jamaica'.³⁵ Research in the Jamaican & Barbados Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1879, census records, and the Caribbean Birth Death and Marriage Index information, reveals that the family presence in the West Indies stretched back to colonial plantation settlements in the 1640s.³⁶ The first plantation in the West Indies owned by the Adams family was a 100-acre plantation in St Michael owned by Lieutenant George Adams (1585, Somerset-1647, Jamaica).³⁷ The family's main residence—for the Maxwell Adams line at least—was the 380 acre plantation, Adams Castle in Christ Church Barbados. Adams Castle was originally part of the estate of Robert Hackett, who on his death left the entire site to his wife, Frances (1659-1694). After Hackett's death, Frances married Thomas Walrond (1630-1694) on the 24th July 1679, and their daughter Frances Walrond was born in 1680.³⁸ Frances Walrond inherited the Walrond Plantation (as it was now known) in 1694, and on the December 23, 1697—three years after her mother and father's death, she married Lee's great, great, great-grandfather, William Adams (1666-1703).³⁹ Frances and

³⁴ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee, Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 14.

³⁵ Gunn, p. 14.

³⁶ The Adams's family tree was traced back using ancestry.co.uk. The tree I have produced, including searchable Census, Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes, and other records can be found here:

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/117923617/family?usePUBJs=true>

³⁷ *George Adams 1585-1647 Non-Cemetery Burial* (2014)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/139543624/george-adams> [accessed December 29, 2017].

³⁸ *Caribbean, Select Births and Baptisms, 1590-1928* (2017) <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/117923617/person/330170441487/facts> [accessed 29 December 2017].

³⁹ *Barbados Church Records, 1637-1849 William Adams, Christ Church. Church of England*, (2017) <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree.117923617/family?usePUBJs=true> [accessed December 29, 2017].

William's son, Thomas Adams (1699-1764) inherited the Adams Castle Plantation in 1750, who in turn, passed this to his son, William Adams (1735-1781). William bequeathed Adams Castle to his son, Thomas Maxwell Adams (1771-1836) and on his death, his wife, Anne St. John Trefusis (1763-1845) claimed for financial reparations for the two hundred and sixteen people enslaved on the plantation and received £4400, 8s 7d. Thomas Maxwell Adams was cousin to Lee's grandfather, Edward Hamlin Adams (1777-1842).⁴⁰

Alongside the Walrond estate owned by Frances and William Adams, William's sister Mary Adams (1668-1700) by marriage to John Shurland (1664-?) owned Rendezvous Plantation (1724), and Mary and William's younger brother Conrade Adams (1679-?) owned both the Staple Grove Plantation (1724) and Hope Castle Plantation (1724). Conrade's son, Conrade the younger (1729-?), owned the Bannatyne Plantation.⁴¹

There are no records showing Edward Hamlin Adams's (Lee's grandfather) ownership of plantations, yet he was trustee for the Hungerford Spooner Charlottenburg Estate in Jamaica, which increased its slave population from 101 at the start of Edward's trusteeship to 208 at the end of his association in 1826. The main crops of the Charlottenburg Estate were sugar and rum.⁴²



Figure 1, Lithograph of Middleton Hall by Augustus Butler, 1853.

⁴⁰ 'Adams Castle, Barbados, Christ Church' *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/585> [accessed October 10, 2017].

⁴¹ 'Bannatyne (?), Barbados, Christ Church' *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/582> [Accessed October 10, 2017].

⁴² 'Edward Hamlin Adams, Profile & Legacies Summary' *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146645839> [Accessed October 10, 2017].

Edward was also a retired partner for the Kingston Merchant House in Jamaica, but despite being heavily involved within the merchant trade he found employment as a lawyer and banker. On Edward's return to England after abolition he bought Middleton Hall in Carmarthenshire in 1824 from Sir William Paxton, undoubtedly with a fortune amassed from profits from slavery, earned and inherited.

Lee's mother, Matilda Adams (1816-1896) was the seventh (and last) child of Edward and his wife Amelia, and had no claim on the family estate, which was inherited by her eldest brother Edward Hamlin Middleton Abadams, who kept the Welsh patronymic 'Ab' to Adams, like his father before him. Edward was also occasionally joined at Middleton by his elder sister Lucy Caroline (1840-1902) and her husband Reverend Richard Gwynne Lawrence (1835-1923).



Figure 2, Middleton Hall, Family and Servants.⁴³

Lee writes to A. Mary F. Robinson after visiting her cousin Lucy at Middleton Hall in 1882:

Saturday I went to Middleton inhabited by my eldest cousin & husband. The park is very large & said to be the finest in three counties. The house is very large, like an Italian villa, built in Louis XVI style. Anything more gloomy than two people (my cousin in law Lawrence is jealous as a moor & has the temper of a fiend) shut up in this house you can't conceive. And I question whether any house has seen so much family folly, misbehaviour & wickedness, such violence & misery in forty years, as this has. It is much worse to me than any amount of Wuthering Heights: a

⁴³ Thomas Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales: A Survey of Country Houses in Wales Demolished since c1900* (London: Save Britain's Heritage, 1986), p. 58.

All the frightful earnestness & obstinacy is from him. The melancholy thing is to see everywhere, in this house, where the only thing aspired after was supremacy, the only thing preserved in enmity & indulgence was rampant, the good quiet motto of grandpapa, too cold to conceive that his children might be trained to self restraint [sic]: “Aspire, Persevere, Indulge Not”.⁴⁴

The frankness with which she speaks of her mother and brother's resemblance to the psychologically disturbed branch of the family tree to Mary is not repeated in the correspondence to her mother Matilda. Just three days prior she had written to Matilda to tell how she 'saw all the pictures, including a very good one of you. Also all the miniatures. Those of grandpapa & grandmamma are extremely sweet.'⁴⁵ Lee's description of her cousin's husband Lawrence is nevertheless presented in melodramatic detail to her mother. He is a 'black slinking fellow with treacle coloured eyes awfully threatening as if smouldering destructive mania; something quite out of the common & like a man in a novel'. She goes on to note, after an extensive explication of family relationships and gleeful gossip, that his behaviour is 'like a horrible mixture of *Wuthering Heights* and *Zola*'.⁴⁶ Both *Wuthering Heights* and the work of Zola, particularly *Les Rougon-Macquart* cycle are, of course, heavily concerned with bloodlines and inheritance. Four years after

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 390.

this letter, Lee critiques the characters of Emily Brontë in *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations*: ‘there is nothing human in *Wuthering Heights*; those people with their sullenness and coldness and frenzy are none of them real men and women’.⁴⁷

The biological and psychological inheritance of Lee’s family, a result of West Indies stock being mixed with that of New England, results in a brooding and violent nature. The curiousness with which Lee describes the Adams family portraits clearly indicate her strong interest, and personal investment, in physiognomic inheritance and inherited characteristics. The Creole slave owners’ acquired characteristics have, Lee narrates, become intertwined with those of the New Englander. This god-fearing ‘soldier’ of legend is her own maternal great-grandfather, Captain John Macpherson (1730-1792). Captain Macpherson—born in Edinburgh, and moved to America in 1746—was not strictly a soldier, but the commander of the British privateer ship *The Britannia* (1757). Macpherson was based in Philadelphia, and amassed a huge fortune in the West Indies, capturing French merchant vessels and other privateering ships. On the 16 June 1758, *The Britannia* engaged in a fierce sea battle with the French store ship, *Monte Christo*, in which Macpherson’s lost his right arm.⁴⁸ *The Pennsylvania Gazette* July 6, 1758 reports this incident:

I am heartily sorry to inform you of Capt. McPherson’s [sic] ill Fate, who happened to fall in with a French Store Ship, mounting 36 carriage guns, with Men in Proportion, which he engaged, and fought till 70 of his Men being either killed or wounded, and his own right Arm shot off, he was forced to Strike to the Enemy, who, boarding him immediately, used him cruelly, plundered him of every Thing, threw his guns overboard, cut down his Masts, and after taking out his sails, and some of his officers, left him and the survivors of his helpless Crew a mere Wreck on the merciless Ocean.⁴⁹

In 1769, after a sad end to his privateering career, a sustained illness, and business problems, Doctor Cadwallader and Doctor Bayard advised isolating Macpherson for his own and his family’s safety. He was locked and guarded by his own servants in a small farmer’s house on his extensive Mount Pleasant property. After a tumultuous life of financial and moral ambiguity, Macpherson published the first part of his autobiography in 1791: *The Very Strange Adventures of John Macpherson*. In the same year, he published his

⁴⁷ Vernon Lee, *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), p. 187.

⁴⁸ Tom Edwards, ‘Chronology of Capt. John Macpherson’ https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/117923617/person/330170602692/media/dbd6d448-e46d-4b38-832e-c069316e2f22?_phsrc=dSw5&usePUBJs=true [accessed November 17, 2017].

⁴⁹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Thu, Jul 6, 1758, p. 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/39391356> [Accessed January 6, 2018].

lectures on moral philosophy.⁵⁰ Lee's grandmother Amelia was born in 1776 at this house in Philadelphia, and died in 1831 in Italy and is buried at the Cimitero Accatolico, Florence.⁵¹

This visit to the family home in Carmarthenshire reveals to Lee her own ancestral family's tendencies towards claiming supremacy, fostering enmity and sinking into indulgence. These qualities evident in the Adams family seem in diametric opposition to the family motto of 'Aspire, Persevere, Indulge Not' which suggests a 'do as I say, not as I do' approach to child rearing. But perhaps these ascetic values were aimed at moderating the Adams's large staff (and not just those resident in Carmarthenshire) rather than the multitudes of children, grandchildren and in-laws (for indeed, if it was an attempt to morally educate the Adams family, it doesn't appear to have worked). The aristocratic lineage, putting slaves to work for profit and the benefit of a lavish and indulgent lifestyle is something Lee returns to in her oeuvre as an antithesis to her own moral erectness. Indeed this anti-colonial anxiety appeared to add to the conflict between Lee and her sister-in-law, Ann 'Annie' Eliza Holdsworth, the Anglo-Caribbean novelist. Chapter VI will chart more fully how that relationship was considered perilous by Lee, both with regards to her half-brother Eugene's psychosomatic disorder, but also in part due to his Adams ancestry. The wild and maniacal Adams clan are not claimed as kin by Lee who absents herself from the descriptions of her family. By separating herself textually, as well as in terms of characteristics, from the family milieu in the letters above, Lee is distancing herself from both her biological lineage, and the historical narrative that lineage is tainted with. Lee notes that in the last forty years the family has exhibited folly, misbehaviour, wickedness, violence and misery. Yet interestingly, Lee aligns her physiognomic readings of her cousins, mother and brother, with those of her ancestors' likenesses, suggesting these traits began much further along the branches than the last forty years.

Lee's family tree, covering the three-hundred years between slaver and plantation owner to Lee herself, is a stratified diagram of lineage and heredity. Whilst Lee's mother Matilda (it is noted above) has no claim on Middleton Hall or the financial inheritance of the Adams line, she and Lee's brother Eugene, have come into possession of the biological property of the family. The recurrence of such strong facial and personality traits as is evident in both the portraits, and characterizations of the family by Lee,

⁵⁰ Edwards, accessed November 17, 2017

⁵¹ *Emily Sophia Macpherson Abadam Adams* <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/128274608> [Accessed January 3, 2018].

emphasizes the hereditary copy-book. Yet Lee refuses this lineage to define herself on paper, almost removing her 'I' from the Adams narrative, in the above letters at least.

Playing with Loaded Dice

Lee's *Baldwin* (1886) is a series of six dialogues. Through the medium of her literary *alter-ego* Baldwin, Lee covers topics as disparate as the morality of belief, the aesthetics of French literature, and vivisection. Christina Zorn suggests that the dialogic form used in *Baldwin* moves Lee's reader towards an awareness of their own intellectual position through the exposition of 'faulty or limited' ideological positions embodied in the characters that Baldwin converses with, and in Baldwin himself.⁵² Zorn adds that in positioning herself—through Baldwin—as arguing for 'epistemological relativity', Lee is in fact questioning the 'validity of absolutes'.⁵³ This is certainly the case in 'Of Honour and Evolution', the third dialogue in the series, concerning scientific morality. It uses the work of vivisection as a way to unpicking the power structures inherent in scientific discourse. 'Of Honour and Evolution' began its life as an open letter to *The Contemporary Review*, May 1882, and during the four years between its subsequent publications the essay underwent multiple emendations, and extension. The scientific ethics discussed in this open letter, and subsequently Baldwin's essay, in particular those in response to vivisection, form part of a trilogy of anti-vivisection polemic pieces written and published by Lee in her lifetime, which align the horror of slavery with that of vivisection.⁵⁴ Via the dialogue between Baldwin and his protégé Michael, adopted by Lee in 'On Honour and Evolution', the limited positions of both the anti- and pro-vivisection movements are intricately expressed. Michael's feeling is—on learning of the practice of vivisection—to dismiss science in its entirety, arguing that all science is tainted by the suffering of animals. Michael recognizes the contiguity of vivisection as a practice for which a moral carbolic soap is required to remove the acquired taint.⁵⁵

A staunch anti-vivisectionist, Lee's own opinions on the subject are expressed by Baldwin. Yet in this essay Baldwin also provides Lee a personal distance when discussing

⁵² Zorn, pp. 66-67.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁴ Vernon Lee, 'Vivisection: An Evolutionist to Evolutionists', in *The Contemporary Review 1866-1900*, vol. 41, May 1882 (pp. 788-811); Vernon Lee, 'Of Honour and Evolution' *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), pp. 127-184; and Vernon Lee 'How I Am Anti-Vivisectionist. To the Editor of the *Morning Post*' *Morning Post* (New York) August 4, 1908.

⁵⁵ Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 173-174.

the problematic ideology of human slavery; something which, as we have seen, her own family and friends were closely connected with. Whilst there seems no surviving direct commentary on her ancestors's slave-ownership, Lee seems to allude to this, and would have been fully cognizant of the issues surrounding this ancestral taint through her wider reading. Slavery critiqued through a literary form was introduced to Lee at an early age via the family friend Henrietta Jenkin (1807-1885). Jenkin was a white Creole born in colonial Jamaica, and first met Lee and her family in Thun and Rome in 1868.⁵⁶ In 1870, Jenkin sent the fourteen-year-old Lee a copy of her novel *Cousin Stella, or, Conflict* (1859) a book which, according to Sue Thomas, was the first Caribbean reworking of *Jane Eyre*.⁵⁷ Thomas continues:

Jenkin represents and commemorates the institution of plantation slavery as despotism that corrupts slave-holders and is anti-slavery [...] *Cousin Stella* emphasizes divine and temporal retribution against slave-owners—their damnation, ruin, and dispossession.⁵⁸

The themes presented by Jenkin in *Cousin Stella*—slave-owners and contagion, corruption, degeneracy and divine retribution—are considered in association with anti-vivisection by Lee in her essay in *Baldwin*. Evolutionary discourse also plays its part within this essay—both obviously through the title ‘On Honour and Evolution’—but also, crucially, in connection with the theory of acquired characteristics. Civilized behaviour in part, Baldwin argues, is not innate, but an acquired characteristic that overrides or supersedes man's more primitive instincts. Furthermore, for Michael, the act of vivisection becomes a taboo, an act so contagious that it impregnates and spoils individuals (and other sciences) on contact. The practice of science is ambivalent, and curiosity and the acquisition of knowledge is a desirable act, yet simultaneously repulsive due to its connection with the taint of vivisection. In this way, the tribe of science becomes contaminated by association, or is seen as contaminated. Whilst Baldwin agrees with Michael's response in part, the dialogue allows Baldwin to present a more nuanced opinion: he argues for science, but only if science has honour. This is lacking in the act of vivisection precisely because there is disproportion: the two classes, animals and their human benefactors, do not equally gain from the practice. Baldwin argues that in an attempt to ‘diminish some of the physical and moral aches inherent’ in the daily lives of

⁵⁶ *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee 1856-1935*, p. xxxix.

⁵⁷ Vernon Lee to Henry Hippolyte Paget, August 6, 1870 in *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee 1856-1935*, p. 28. Sue Thomas, *Imperialism, Reform, and the Making of Englishness in “Jane Eyre”* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 104.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

humankind, we submit ‘thousands of beasts’ to suffer in ‘fierce agony’, and to face sacrifice at the altar of human improvement.⁵⁹ For Baldwin, this amounts to a ‘huge theft’, a ‘casting of loaded dice’.⁶⁰

This is relevant because it throws into light Lee’s (via her alter-ego Baldwin) monogenic stance with regards to evolution and anthropology. Simplistically conflating Lee with Baldwin may be problematic and whilst Lee’s introduction to the work itself recognizes the entanglement between author and character, we must pay attention to Zorn’s suggestion of a ‘limited’ perspective. Yet, I would suggest that the framework of ‘On Honour and Evolution’ is an exception to Zorn’s argument concerning the validity of absolutes. Lee plays with two opinions on the vivisection debate that are separated by an ideological hair’s-breadth. Neither Baldwin or Michael (or Lee for that matter) are under the illusion that vivisection is a necessary evil, it is only the extent to which it taints its sister sciences that is under debate.

Therefore, it becomes possible to plausibly align Baldwin’s belief in monogenism with Lee’s personal opinions. The reader is provided with two examples which illustrate this point. The first is where Baldwin argues that despite the loss of life for the soldier who dies in battle, he is ‘sacrificed to the people at home’ as ‘part of those’ whom he fights on behalf of: the sacrifice in this instance is not a waste, the soldier’s duty has protected those at home and their way of life. In fact, Baldwin recognizes the reciprocity of the act and adds that he ‘has been protected in mind and body by the whole civilization’—the soldier has been nurtured and protected by those individuals who have lived and sacrificed themselves before him: each subsequent generation has evolved, humanity has developed to its current pinnacle, and the soldier must fight to protect it. It is his turn to ‘fight and die miserably in defence’ of his country. Yet this appears to be on a nationalistic, rather than species-led fight for survival.⁶¹ But, crucially, Baldwin widens his field of scope and presents the following example:

In the course of history we see whole classes and nations temporarily sacrificed for the benefit of others, those classes and nations have yet in the long run benefitted [...] in the case of the feudal serfs and the negro slaves, the very oppression [of the serfs or negro slaves] meant the predominance of the class and race most capable of improvement, which inevitably led to a raising of level even for the temporarily sacrificed class or nation, and of which that sacrificed class or nation would, if let alone, have been incapable; moreover, that very class or nation sacrificed at one historical moment to another class or nation, owed much of whatever

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 158.

advantages itself enjoyed to the sacrifice to it of a class or nation equally inferior [...] The system is harsh, but in the long run equitable.⁶²

This is in effect a blotting-book: a recognition that humanity transcends the racial and nationalistic strata arbitrarily put into place. Whilst Baldwin's opinions on this are problematic from a twenty-first century perspective for many reasons, they nevertheless clearly suggest a commitment to the monogenic origin of humanity. That systemized abuse and enslavement exists, be it the serfs, or African Negroes, Baldwin recognizes. He also acknowledges the benefit this has had in 'raising' the oppressor beyond what could be thought to be achieved—but only because at this historical moment they were the most capable class or ethnicity. Yet the wealth, technology, and knowledge gleaned from this inhumane treatment of one human by another, will, Baldwin argues, eventually benefit the oppressed too: perhaps the oppressed will even become the oppressor. Improvement relies upon competition, evolution—and the adaption of the species to its environment—depends on positive acquisition. By suggesting this, Baldwin is talking about species improvement. Not race, or class or nation, but species. In other words, a recognition of the monogenic origin of the human species, not the polygenic genesis of multiple race-species.

Yet this attitude to the eventual dissolution of race difference is not always consistent within the essay. Baldwin is prone to utilize the metaphor of colonization in relation to the subjects of vivisection: the physiologist or vivisector is aligned with Cook and Vancouver, 'setting sail not knowing for what coasts', observing if 'some effect will not manifest itself in some particular set of organs, which happens to be the guessed-at unknown Polynesia of his mind'.⁶³ Baldwin builds on this by introducing an analogy between Professor Virchow and the slaver: Virchow (1821-1902) was a German anthropologist, prehistorian, biologist and physician. Virchow founded the German Anthropological Association in 1869, and was anti-evolutionist.⁶⁴ Virchow considered Ernest Haeckel's (Semon's mentor) support for evolution at the conference of the German Association of Naturalists and Physicians (Munich, September 1877) as 'wilful and despotic view' with an 'extreme bias'.⁶⁵ He was a prolific researcher and writer and

⁶² Ibid., p. 158.

⁶³ Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Myron Schultz, 'Rudolf Virchow', *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 14: 9 (2008), 1479-1481 (p. 1480).

⁶⁵ Rudolf Virchow, *The Freedom of Science in the Modern State*, trans. Anon. (London: John Murray, 1878), p. xiii.

his name is associated with multiple specialisms, and is included in many examples of medical terminology. Baldwin states:

the argument of Professor Virchow, that a man may in all morality inflict whatever pain necessary for his purposes (for vivisection like all rational crime, restricts pain to the strictly necessary) as long as he does so on creatures which do not belong to some other man, but are his honestly bought chattels, brings the great German thinker into close intellectual contact with slave-dealers and slave-owners whom mankind at last pronounced unfit to judge moral questions.⁶⁶

This is a bold statement about the inhumanity of slavery, which has ‘at last’ been eradicated from civilized society (an interesting perspective considering Lee’s consciousness of her own ancestry). This is not a direct quote from Virchow, but paraphrases his argument in debate of vivisection at the August 1881 International Medical Congress, as reported by *The Times*. Lee was also initially close to Frances Power Cobbe, who had targeted Virchow in her anti-vivisection polemics, even writing to Darwin for his signature on an open letter to end Virchow’s experiments.⁶⁷ Lee writes that Michael is ‘fresh from the polemical literature of vivisection’ that has been ‘culled from the various papers’ by the ‘notoriously most honourable men and distinguished thinkers’ such as ‘Professor Owen, Dr. Carpenter, and Professor Virchow’.⁶⁸ Virchow was an ardent anti-Darwinist, and a sceptic of the emergent thesis, yet this was not, unlike Hunt, informed by a religious zeal. He also refuted the discovery of the Neanderthal, positing that the fragmented skull bone belonged to a diseased and severely injured human.⁶⁹ Whilst Virchow saw race as immutable, and denied the process of evolution, Andrew Zimmerman notes that after anthropological study of hair, eye and skin colour in school children across Germany Virchow concluded ‘that Jews and Germans were separate races’.⁷⁰ But Zimmerman suggests that despite this ‘German Anthropologists generally believed that race was an essential and unvarying characteristic of human populations’, but ‘they were not polygenists and generally opposed the idea that different races had fundamentally different mental abilities.’⁷¹

⁶⁶ Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 174-175.

⁶⁷ Charles Darwin to H. E. Litchfield, 4 January 1875 in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin: Volume 23; Volume 1875* ed. Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 66-68, & 307-308.

⁶⁸ Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 174.

⁶⁹ Jane E. Buikstra and Charlotte A. Roberts, *The Global History of Paleopathology: Pioneers and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 388-390.

⁷⁰ Andrew Zimmerman, ‘Anti-Semitism as Skill: Rudolf Virchow’s *Schulstatistik* and the Racial Composition of Germany’, *Central European History*, 32: 4 (December 1999), 409-429 (p. 426).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

That there are men of science who play with loaded dice is, as we have seen, a reason for Michael to shun science in its entirety. Furthermore, this representation of human morality (the vivisector, the slave owner) is inherently degenerative: in reaching out to attain advantage over the laws of nature, humankind is slipping back towards its primitive, and monogenic, origin. Morality—as explained by Baldwin—is a quirk of evolutionary development, a mutation distinguishing humankind from non-human apes. To ignore this adaption, which Baldwin argues makes us so successful, is to revoke what she calls the ‘highest result of our gradual evolution’. To descend once more into slavery—as supported by Hunt’s British Anthropological Society, as we have seen—is a return to moral primitiveness.

it is contrary to the tendencies of the highest result of our gradual evolution [...] we are laying obliterating fingers upon those delicate moral features which have thus slowly and arduously been moulded into shape [...] we are letting ourselves slip instead of holding ourselves erect, and weakening our moral muscle.⁷²

The obliterating fingers are not grappling with the non-human animal subject, but are self-harming. The ‘delicate moral features’ evolved are those of humanity: we are destroying our moral identity. In highlighting the moral slip, Lee argues we are no longer ‘holding ourselves erect’ there is the suggestion of Darwin’s theory of evolution: the slow change from quadruped to biped, *Hominoidea* to *Homo Sapiens*. Harriet Ritvo’s *The Animal Estate* (1989) considers the aims of anti-vivisectionist literature to be double pronged: to ‘rescue animal victims and to suppress dangerous elements of human society’.⁷³ Yet Lee’s focus is inherently fixed on the morality of intelligent and predominantly wealthy ‘cool men of science’.

Clearly, ‘On Honour and Evolution’ is primarily an ideological discourse unpicking the problematic nature of vivisection’s role in scientific development. But via Baldwin, it implicitly reveals something of Lee’s opinions on the origins of humanity, with Lee firmly standing with Darwin on the ethnological and monogenic side of the debate. That the morality of vivisection is aligned with slavery is telling of Lee’s feelings on her ancestral inheritance. The contagion of vivisection spreads through social memory and, despite the attempts by anti-vivisectionists to legislate against and prohibit the act, anatomists and physiologists continue to transgress and experiment on animals. Any discipline benefitting from this violation (pharmacists, surgeons, physicians) is subject to

⁷² Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 167-168.

⁷³ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in Victorian England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 131.

this contemporary societal taboo, and will continue to be so, through many subsequent generations. For Michael, the ‘clean-handed’ men of science are contaminated by contact with the ‘foul-handed’ science of physiology, a corruption of the discipline.⁷⁴ For Lee’s maternal ancestry, the taint of slavery is passed stratigraphically through the generations, and via Edward Hamlin Adams’s handshakes with the owners of the Hungerford Spooner Estate and the Kingston Merchant House. This is also further touched upon in *Baldwin* in the essay ‘The Consolations of Belief’:

individuals whose mode of life is most favourable to the welfare of the majority have a greater chance of surviving and leaving descendants, a certain habit of conforming to the general standard of proper behaviour becomes hereditary in the race, producing, every now and then [...] an individual more than usually sensitive to the common welfare who adds some new idea to the idea of right and wrong [...] some man who says: These negroes, despite their blackness, feel the same physical and moral pain as yourselves; in this respect they are exactly like the white men whom you neither sell nor lash; so why would you sell and lash them?⁷⁵

As the contagion of slavery is passed through generations, so is the inheritance of morals. Baldwin acknowledges it merely takes one individual to question the moral *status quo* for ethical change to take place. Lee’s ancestors, who utilized slaves to tend their plantations and accumulate great wealth are an example of this moral stain; one that has been passed to—and has to be dealt with—by Lee herself. That Lee stands apart from the pro-slavery anthropological arguments of Virchow and others, and separates herself from her plantation-owning family suggests that she is attempting to rid herself of the contagion—acquired, and passed down through the generations, and through the handshakes—of the Adams’ ‘family values’. She is the individual sensitive to common welfare, the change inspiring a new morality.

***Vital Lies* and ‘Anthropological Apologetics’**

⁷⁴ Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 140. The metaphor for contagion by touch is one that Lee refers to again and again in relation to vivisection, in the first instance in a letter to Linda Villari, August 14, 1879, regarding her friend eminent anti-vivisectionist Frances Power Cobbe. Lee suggests Power Cobbe is the ‘moral carbolic acid’ with which to clean her hands that have so often shook ‘the hands of people who have touched those of Prof. Schiff’. And again, in *Baldwin* ‘[...] let any of us ask his conscience how often he has successfully resisted the desire of believing in the moral cleanliness of the hands which he is forced to shake in comradeship, or pleased to squeeze in friendship and admiration’ (pp. 173-174).

⁷⁵ Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 112.

Moral identity and evolution are also key issues in *Vital Lies: Studies of Some Recent Obscurantism* (1912). Throughout the two volumes of this work, Lee is concerned by the scientific repurposing and reemployment of religion as a means of promoting ideological concerns. It is those sciences which are concerned with '[p]hilological exegesis,' and, importantly, the 'anthropological study of myths and institutions, psychology and metaphysical analysis', which have previously 'undermined what used to be called *religious truths*,' and are now 'invoked to reinstate some portion of them in the garb of desirable and valuable errors'.⁷⁶ The vital lie of the title is the way in which Lee's chosen group of obscurantists—William James, Charles Pierce, Father Tyrrell, Georges Sorel and particularly Ernest Crawley —'apply their logic to re-defining truth in such a way as to include edifying and efficacious fallacy and falsehood'.⁷⁷

Ernest Crawley's *The Tree of Life* (1905) is the subject of Lee's 'Anthropological Apologetics' chapter, the first in volume II of *Vital Lies*. Crawley, Lee argues, dredges up wisdom and morals from the 'primeval filth' of barbarous thought and through them traces the origins of Original Sin and the Trinity.⁷⁸ Whilst Lee's edition of Crawley's *The Tree of Life*, and his earlier work *The Mystic Rose: a Study of Primitive Marriage* (1902) are unfortunately not part of the British Institute holdings, we know Lee read these works diligently, through the intertextual allusions and direct quotations from these works within the chapter.

Crawley was an anthropologist and sexologist whose works predominantly explored marriage rites and sexual taboos. He was a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute and wrote for the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* and the *Eugenics Review*, including an essay considering 'Primitive Eugenics' (1910). Crawley is chiefly remembered now for his study of the connection between exogamy and the taboo; a form of early-humankind's sexual selection between 'fine' men and women, and a primitive precursor to eugenics.⁷⁹ The strictness of the taboo discussed by Crawley in primitive people is said to inhibit the 'tumescence and detumescence' which is now prevalent in the modern subject in civilized society. The taboo also avoids any feeling of sentimentality as reproduction and the rites surrounding it are treated with respect and

⁷⁶ Vernon Lee, *Vital Lies: Studies of Some Recent Obscurantism*, Vol I. (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912), p. vii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁷⁸ Vernon Lee, *Vital Lies: Studies of Some Recent Obscurantism*, Vol II. (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912), pp. 5-6.

⁷⁹ A. E. Crawley, 'Primitive Eugenics', *Eugenics Review*, 1: 4 (Jan 1910), 275-280 (p. 276).

order.⁸⁰ Crawley's discourse is expressed in chiefly Darwinian terminology; his works discuss both sexual selection and '*natural* selection' (the italics are Crawley's own). Yet, similarly to the founders of the anthropological discipline itself, he is concerned with the Judeo-Christian origin of humanity and certain branches of humankind's return to paradise. In 'Primitive Eugenics', he writes:

Behind the stories of a Golden Age and a Garden of Eden there is a biological truth. By his own act man banished himself from the life natural; he is now trying to find his way back again "carefully and with tears".⁸¹

It is this return to religion which is also the focus of Crawley's earlier work *The Tree of Life* and it is this work that is critiqued by Lee in *Vital Lies*. For even the title—the tree of life—has connotations of both Darwinian evolution and Christian dogma:

A similar misconception of the normal course of religious evolution is to be seen in the popular views which trace religion back to totemism, fetishism, taboo, nature-worship, or the like phrases of religious experience. Such explanations at most would only show us stages of development—not its beginning; the evidence, however, proves that the normal course of development is not even through such stages, but that these are, with one exception taboo, mere shunting-places off the main line of evolution; or, to change the metaphor, they are lower branches, which, though growing from the main trunk, do not much affect it, but wither and fall while the tree of religion develops upwards.⁸²

And:

Medieval mysticism, returning to a permanent instinct, saw in the figure of Christ on the cross an incarnation of Life in the midst of Death, the Tree of Life nailed to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁸³

Crawley's work is a study of the origins and evolution of religion, through a scientific, anthropological perspective, in the tradition of Frazer. For Crawley 'that what we term "religious" marks a psychological predisposition of biological character, which is of supreme evolutionary importance'.⁸⁴ That religion in its multiple guises has survived throughout the evolutionary process suggests to Crawley that it has some advantage to humankind, and the particular interest in the survival of taboo, when fetishism *et al* withered on the vine, is fascinating.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 277.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 275.

⁸² Crawley, *The Tree of Life: A Study of Religion* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1905), p. 176.

⁸³ Ibid., p. viii.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

The Tree of Life first presents both the rationalist and anthropological attacks on religion, and then offers his defence. Crawley recognizes that religion, alongside other developments in the history of humanity, is 'subject to the laws of order', the process of evolution.⁸⁵ He suggests that the scientific comparative method supports the notion that 'savage and barbarous religions and revelations' appear during the 'suited stage of culture',⁸⁶ and that these 'primitive religions' lead up 'by regular process to Christianity'.⁸⁷ Crawley proposes the work of Edwin Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* as a 'step in the right direction' in defending Christianity using the scientific method.⁸⁸ Whilst Starbuck's *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness* (1901) focuses its study on Judeo-Christian religions in the West, his scholarship is undoubtedly anthropological in approach.⁸⁹ This text argues that religious conversion relies upon similar methods to those used in 'political campaigns, in battle, in mobs and strikes':

Affirmation pure and simple, kept free of all reasoning and all proof, is one of the surest means of making an idea enter the mind of crowds... Affirmation, however, has no real influence unless it be repeated, and so far as possible in the same terms. The influence of repetition is due to the fact that the repeated statement is embedded in the long run in the profound regions of our unconscious selves, in which the motives of our actions are forged... When an affirmation has been sufficiently repeated, and there is a unanimity in its repetition, what is called a current of opinion is formed, and the powerful mechanism of contagion intervenes.⁹⁰

This passage reveals the three expedients for imbuing the group mind with belief: affirmation, repetition and contagion. This positive form of conditioning must be repeated before it can be embedded, and actioned upon. The engramic action on the irritable substance—Semon's term for the reproduction and storage of the sensory input in the memory—through repeated affirmation ensures that despite the mnemonic action being uncontrollable, every individual in the crowd responds to the same stimulus. Therefore this is not a true 'contagion' *per se* but a mass recall of the repeated affirmations.

But when talking of religion what does Crawley mean? Religion is for him concerned with the preservation of the vital instincts: the will to maintain life has itself evolved, from an unconscious stage, through a sub-conscious stage, and finally to

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 133 & p. 137.

⁸⁹ Edward Diller Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co, Ltd., 1911). Harold Acton Archive, VL 200.19 STA.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

consciousness.⁹¹ Crawley argues that during the greater part of human history ‘man has not only failed to understand what religion is, but has even been unconscious that he is religious’.⁹² Only through gaining a consciousness of religion is humanity able to question—and condemn—and to ‘reform’ these concepts into a new religion with the ‘dogma and ritual omitted, and the supernatural element excluded’.⁹³ The drives of hunger, thirst, and sex are likewise facets of these elemental instincts, which follow the same stages of development; from innate behaviour to a rational process. And in controlling the drives to maintain, preserve, or begin life, the taboo continues to fulfil its important role. In maintaining the life of the individuals subject to the social taboo, the taboo itself is passed down through generations, becoming a psychological acquired characteristic that is passed to subsequent generations via a Lamarckian mode of inheritance.

The Tree of Life proposes that the ‘material of religion’ therefore, ‘seems to have been already existent before man emerged from the brute-stage’ and evolved steadily, in synchronization with our intellectual development.⁹⁴ He continues that this ‘material fills so completely the narrow elemental channel of primitive life from which all our civilization flows [...] nothing moves in this world of ours that is not religious in origin’.⁹⁵ The primitive life of Crawley’s statement is not that of monogenism—Darwin’s primordial soup—but the genesis, and subsequent improvement of the first ‘primitive’ couple, Adam and Eve.

It is this opinion which Lee finds problematic in *Vital Lies*:

“And,” continues Mr Crawley, “when we are told that sane and normal characters do actually live without religion, the reply is that they are still religious subconsciously, and in many case have turned against the ancient faith through some misconception of its meaning.”

Quite so. And Mr Crawley’s book is intended to show just them-people like me, for instance, who are religious in their sub-consciousness, the anthropological-mythological facts, and the sociological-evolutional reasons, why they had better cease turning against their ancient creed and now sub-conscious.⁹⁶

These beliefs are extant because they once explained the natural occurrences that threatened what Crawley termed the will-to-life of our primitive ancestors.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 214.

⁹² Ibid., p. 124.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 125.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 228.

⁹⁶ Lee, *Vital Lies: II*, pp. 50-51.

Yet Lee argues that we—*Homo Erectus*—are morally erect enough to distance ourselves from these primitive beliefs, from the depths of our primitive ancestors's nonsense and obscenity:

we have learned to think of sickness, droughts and draughts, storms, accidents, as concatenations of outer circumstances which, even if we cannot forestall, we can in most cases understand [...] The object of primitive thought is barely considered apart from the needs and customs of the subject.⁹⁷

Many of these beliefs and rites, which appear to us as ridiculous, obscene or ferocious, may have been at the time of their origin, respectable scientific hypotheses and moral humanitarian practices. Moreover, they were not only useful in keeping our savage ancestors alive, and inducing them directly to beget and nurture us, but they were even more useful even than that in securing mental attitudes of reverence, of obedience, of conservatism.⁹⁸

These practices are primitive, and Lee argues that we are not. Religion is to Lee a return to the instinctive and unthinking. There must be a move away from the importance of life itself, and instead a focus on how that life is to be lived. In this sense, the life-preserving taboo becomes a form of stasis. The subconscious prohibition enforced by the taboo is not—as Crawley suggests—a product of evolution, that itself evolved into the foundations of early Christian religion; but as Lee recognizes, a form of conservatism, a dismissal of the adaptive abilities of humankind. As Freud was to argue, the loss of the memory of the motive for the prohibition ensures that any attempt at disposing of the taboo by intellectual process must fail, since they cannot find any base of attack. This echoes the way in which Crawley utilizes the unconsciousness of religious belief as a prime reason for its survival during the evolutionary process. Taboo exists within the lowest strata of human belief, with subsequent forms of religious layering above: Lee alludes to Crawley's use of the strata motif by suggesting Crawley is 'our Virgil' on the descent through 'layer after layer, depths within depths, of superstitions we dare scarcely conceive'.⁹⁹ Crawley's model emerges from the stratigraphical method, he is able to speculate on the origins of religion through hypothesis. For Crawley, the present formation and morality of Christianity is the key to past primitive mythic systems, such as taboo. There are echoes of a Uniformitarian style of immutable constancy, but focused

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

upon anthropological spirituality rather than geologic gradations. Lee recognizes Crawley as a 'Virgil' figure guiding his reader's decent, layer by layer, into the inferno of the taboo.

The 'strength and obsessive character' of the taboo is driven by its 'unconscious opponent, the concealed and undiminished desire—that is to say, to an internal necessity inaccessible to conscious inspection'.¹⁰⁰ It is the foundation for all religion, it is elemental: taboo, Crawley argues, is the basis of society, 'the support of all 'religious, moral and social institutions'.¹⁰¹ Through taboo, the elemental nature of humanity is kept in check, resulting in the preservation of life:

There is a moral result of religion which if of supreme importance in evolution. By imposing rules and taboos upon action it checks physical domination, and thus gives non-physical strength the opportunity needed for development. Without this, intellect and character would have been helpless, and man would hardly have progressed above the brute.¹⁰²

As life under religious prohibition—via the taboo—may reproduce, the resulting offspring will, most certainly, be subject to the same prohibition by its own parents, tribe or race. In repeating the subconscious ambivalence of the taboo, over-and-over, through generation after generation: a 'racial selection' is confirmed.¹⁰³ Lee's critique of this argument is to suggest that Crawley's polygenic racial instincts are counter-intuitive:

how does your *Racial Instinct* set to work? And ought it not to have resulted in the survival of fetichism and taboo, or at least the disappearance of the races who first got rid of such useful superstitions? [...] Perhaps the obscurantists might answer that inertness, fatigue, sluggishness, are themselves Racial advantages and due to the great Racial Instinct. Shall we conclude that if people had been more alacritous and elastic, the human race would have ceased to have offspring, been gobbled up by Palaeolithic monsters or (what obscurantists might like even less), that its finer varieties, for instance the noble Aryan, would have philosophized themselves into non-resistance against the Negro, or even [...] into intermarriage with the Semite? This leads to the dilemma, either that the superior sub-race was not superior in intelligence and adaptive power, or, that too much superiority may be a bad thing; with the manifest corollary that a dash of the Negro, a preponderance of the Semite, might have done the nobler Aryan races a world of good. The proposition that *prejudices have been necessary for keeping up the standard or strain of superiority*, would thus require eking out by a counter proposition that *prejudiced must be broken through to diminish that unpractical superiority*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Freud, 'Totem and Taboo', p. 30.

¹⁰¹ Crawley, *The Tree of Life*, p. 201.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 285-286.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *Vital Lies: II*, pp. 143-144. Lee's italics.

The racial instinct is not progressive, but restrictive; eking out through the evolutionary process any subtle differences in physicality, psychology or religion. This shores up multiple separate racial identities, which anthropologists such as Crawley promote in their polygenic positioning. Lee jests that if humanity had been more elastic—more adaptable—this would have halted reproduction, and, in parallel with her opinions on her grandfather Edward Hamlin Adams, argues that the superiority of a ‘sub-race’ is stultifying, and racial integration would do the world of good to humankind. Lee’s inherited familial taint, the stain of profiting from slavery, the so-called racial superiority bares little evolutionary benefit, as far as Lee is able to see.

This reaction to anthropology’s fixation on the relationship between the taboo and religion is also explored in Starbuck’s *The Psychology of Reason*, which was read and lightly annotated by Lee. At one point in the text Starbuck remarks (and Lee underlines):

That there is a kinship between religion and sex has been fully recognized recently by most sociologists, alienists and psychologists. The interpretation of the connection between them is usually left in such a way, however, as to warrant a few words in regard to their relations in fully-developed religion.

We are not to suppose that in finding the remote conditions under which a relation sprang up we have found the clue to the nature of the fully-developed product. Even if it is true that religion was at first intimately bound up in those duties and ceremonies which are the outgrowth of sex, in its latter stages it may have entirely changed character.¹⁰⁵

In the margins of her copy, next to this passage, Lee has firmly written ‘Crawley’. Starbuck’s warning of caution required in interpreting this link has not, Lee notes, been heeded by Crawley. For example, Crawley makes an explicit connection ‘between the religious and sexual impulses [...] the religious emotion springs from the same source as the sexual’ and by ‘preserving sexual integrity and by consecrating this secondary source of life, religion performs a service on which the race depends’.¹⁰⁶ Religion is the taboo that maintains the constancy of racial distinction and limits human adaptability. The taboo is inherited, becoming a mnemonic response triggered by subconscious desires. For Lee, recognising the important mechanisms of sexual desire and of heredity, the sexually controlling taboo is anachronistic: a primitive rite, a psychological remnant. This taboo is one Lee overtly attempts to eradicate intellectually, and to distance herself from socially, in relation to her family’s ties with West Indian slavery. Crawley is problematic for her because he refuses to recognize the imperfectability of the species, and expresses

¹⁰⁵ Starbuck, p. 401.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *Vital Lies: II*, p. 14.

it in terms that are structurally implicated in anthropological racism. Lee thus sees anthropology as always trying to return to Edenic perfection, which is itself a retrogressive act, one which eradicates any potential evolutionary advantages.

Jane Ellen Harrison: *Ancient Art and the Ritual*

The Ballet of the Nations: A Present Day Morality (1915) is an allegorical satire of the First World War.¹⁰⁷ Concerned with the pervasive atmosphere of nationalism across Europe in the years preceding and during the onset of war, Lee attempted to shine some limelight on this issue in her play. Whilst such an explicitly political work does not immediately seem to intervene in the debates connecting anthropology, race and the taboo, I would like to suggest the existence of multiple strands of anthropological influences between *Vital Lies* and *The Ballet*, via Crawley, and also through the work of Jane Harrison (1850-1928).

Scholarship by Stefano Evangelista and Mary Beard has shown that there was much social and professional interaction between Lee and Harrison, albeit occasionally strained and almost always mediated via Eugénie Sellers—who, we noted in Chapter II, introduced Giacomo Boni to Lee. Evangelista notes in his monograph *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (2009) that in the early 1890s ‘Lee came into contact with the pioneering classical scholarship of Eugénie Sellers and Jane Harrison’, during which time ‘she drew on their ideas to formulate a critique of classicism’ which marked the end of ‘her public identification with aestheticism and art for art’s sake’.¹⁰⁸ Evangelista considers Lee’s aestheticism up until 1895, and draws on the biography of Harrison by Mary Beard: there are no references to Lee’s *The Ballet of Nations* (1915) or Harrison’s *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) in either work. Like Evangelista, Beard limits her interest in Lee to the period prior to 1890, and mentions Harrison’s work *Ancient Art* only twice.¹⁰⁹

Harrison was a classics scholar and anthropologist who had made Lee’s acquaintance in the early 1880s. Beard suggests that the relationship soon soured after

¹⁰⁷ Vernon Lee, *The Ballet of Nations* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915). This illustrated edition will be referred to in italics, when referencing ‘The Ballet of Nations’ as part of the *Philosophic War Trilogy* included in *Satan the Waster* this will be in quote marks.

¹⁰⁸ Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (Chippenham and Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 20.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 113, 154.

the publication of Harrison's work *Introductory Studies in Greek Art* (1885) in which Lee found issue with the 'style, theory and content' of the work.¹¹⁰ Yet in 1915 Lee produced a lecture entitled the *Harrison Unanimism Lecture*, the text of which is archived at the special collections at Colby College, Maine. Unanimism focuses on ideas of collective emotion, or a collective consciousness: it is a facet of crowd behaviour in which the individuality of members of a group are lost and overridden by simultaneous action. Kirsty Martin discusses how Unanimism's oneness of spirit fits within an anthropological discourse where 'primitive peoples' believe in a 'co-existent and intertwined' participation of souls.¹¹¹ This echoes the subject of Starbuck's group mentality, an area of anthropology under particular scrutiny during this period. I would argue that this interest in the collective conscience—which appears in *The Ballet of Nations* as the Orchestra of Patriotism—and Harrison's work on anthropology provides a framework for Lee's public pacifism. *The Ballet of Nations* was written at Whitsuntide in the first year of the war, 1914.¹¹² A war which Lee felt to be 'all about nothing at all; gigantically cruel', 'needless and senseless', and could only have been staged by 'the legendary Power of Evil'.¹¹³ For Lee, 'The Ballet' provides a public critique of the war from her standpoint, it argues against the growth of patriotism, the terrifying violence of all sides, and presents pacifism as a worthy position. Integral to understanding the play—I would argue—is Lee's reading in anthropology. Lee's belief that the human species is monogenic in origin (counter to the polygenic beliefs of late nineteenth, early twentieth century anthropology) becomes an intellectual crux for her pacifist stance.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹¹ Martin, p. 74, n. 102.

¹¹² Vernon Lee, 'Introduction', in *Satan the Waster: A Philosophic War Trilogy with Notes and Introduction* (New York, NY: John Lane, The Bodley Head: 1920), p. vii.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. vii.

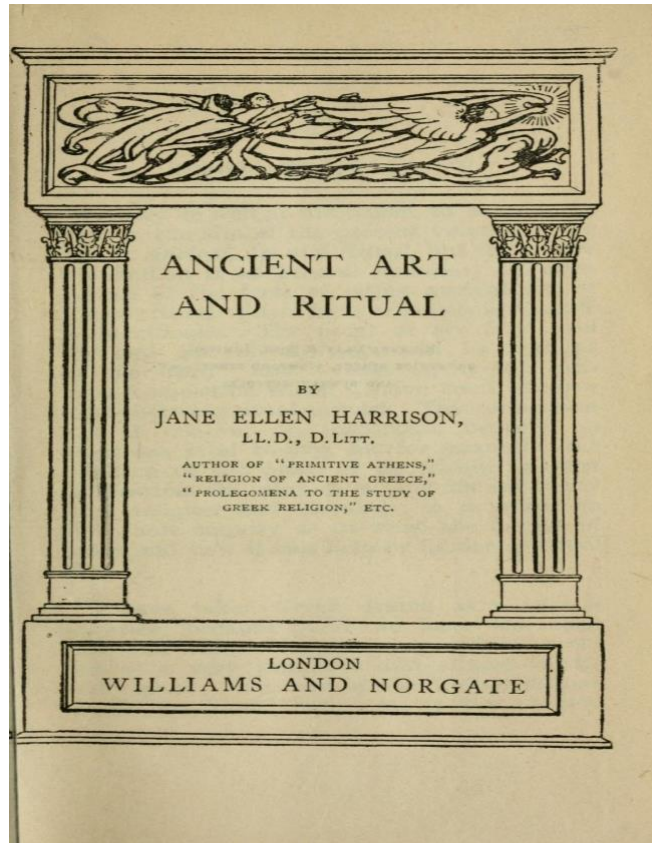


Figure 2, Jane Ellen Harrison *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913).

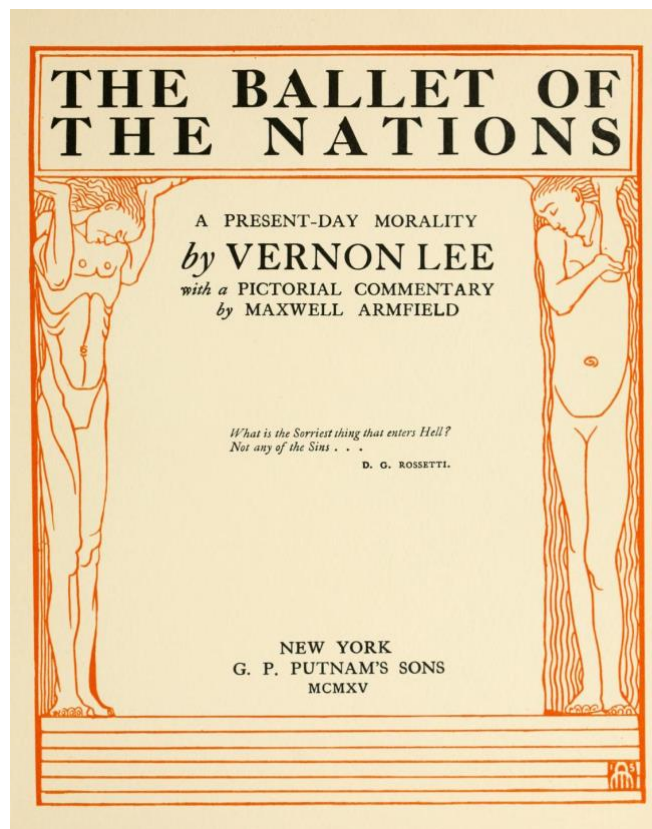


Figure 3, Frontispiece of Vernon Lee's *The Ballet of Nations*.

The Ballet begins onstage with the rousing of the Passions by Ballet Master Death whilst the Neutral Nations, the Muse of History and the Chorus of Ages-To-Come settle down to watch the *corps-de-ballet* (which they, and the non-performed audience cannot see). The Passions are organized into the Orchestra of Patriotism, and the boy Heroism leads the Nations' macabre dance to the play's finale. *The Ballet* in the G. P. Putnam's Sons edition is given a 'pictorial commentary' by the artist Maxwell Armfield. Armfield's illustrations—strikingly off kilter with the plot of Lee's play—are discussed in detail in Grace Brockington's 'Performing Pacifism: The Battle between Artist and Author in *The Ballet of Nations*'. Brockington contends that the dissonance between the classical-style illustrations and Lee's narrative creates discordance between words and image.¹¹⁴ Brockington states that the 'antagonism between their 'concepts of renaissance' becomes apparent in the *Ballet* when 'Armfield chooses to illustrate, and vindicate, the aestheticism which Lee's text lampoons, rather than to visualize the battlefield which is the real subject of her polemic'.¹¹⁵ As can be seen in Figure 4, *The Ballet* itself—Lee's words—are framed within the decorated arch that encloses both the text and Armfield's illustrations: yet there is little parallel between the two.

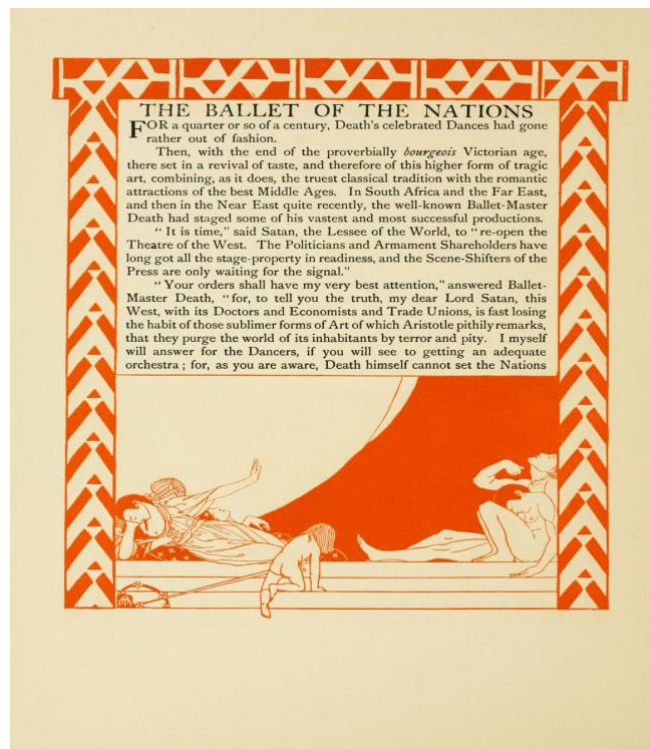


Figure 4, The first page of *The Ballet of Nations*.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Brockington, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 153.

¹¹⁶ Lee, *The Ballet of Nations* [n.p.].

The aestheticism of Greek culture—to which Armfield subscribes—is itself descended from earlier primitive civilizations and is integral to Harrison’s text and its study of ritual. Harrison links the primitive person or the ‘heathen’ as a ‘being of strange perversity’ willing to bow down to any god, and notes his ‘blindness’ this aligns him to Lee’s blind boy, Heroism.¹¹⁷ Harrison suggests that understanding the psychology of the heathen is of benefit to contemporary readers ‘since we realize that our own behaviour is based on instincts kindred to his—in order that, by understanding his behaviour we may understand, and it may better, our own’.¹¹⁸ If we follow Harrison’s argument, Lee’s use of the blind boy Heroism in *The Ballet* is for a didactic rather than a worshipful motive. In the unseeing and unquestioning sacrifice, there is the recognition of the futility of his waste on the battlefield. There is a link evident between this sentiment, and that of Baldwin, in the reciprocity of the soldier to ‘fight and die miserably’ for the nation that has protected him.¹¹⁹

Harrison writes (and Lee underlines) in *Art and Antiquity* that:

and so arises the war-dance, or the death-dance, or the hunt dance [it is not] after a battle or hunt that he dances in order to commemorate it, but before. Once the commemorative dance has got abstracted or generalized it becomes material for the magical dance, the dance pre-done [...] The dance, as it were, a sort of precipitated desire, a discharge of pent-up emotion into action.¹²⁰

Satan’s ballet is a pre-cursor to the war dance for real. The performed dance has a sense of perpetuity, Clio, The Muse-of-History has been to other performances at Satan’s theatre, and it is hinted at, will be invited to many more. The attendance of The Ages-to-Come completes this temporal triad: the past, present and future. Lee’s *Ballet* was published one year into the World War: before ‘the Nations have danced themselves to stumps’. Using Harrison’s timeline of the ritual, we can ask: is Lee’s *Ballet* a commemoration, preparation for a successful war, or the event to be memorialized?

There is a sense of framing in the introductory notes to ‘The Ballet’ as part of *Satan the Waster: A Philosophic War Trilogy with Notes and Introduction*: a theatre within the theatre space. The curtains—and the performance—open to the scene onstage of *The World Theatre*, located in *No Place, Nowhere*. The theatre licence holder and manager is

¹¹⁷ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient art and Ritual* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), p. 29.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹⁹ Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 158.

¹²⁰ Harrison, p. 43.

none-other than Satan.¹²¹ The play is sandwiched between Lee's instructional notes; the first 'To the Reader' requires the play to 'be read, and especially read out loud, as *prose*'.¹²² The performance is itself about the staging and performance of a ballet, but despite the performative aspect of reading the work out loud, the central aspect—the ballet—is to remain unseen:

Author's Note for Stage Managers (other than Satan).

In the event of this play being performed, it is the author's imperative wish that no attempt be made at showing the Dancing of the Nations. The stage upon the stage must be turned in such a manner that nothing beyond the footlights, the Orchestra and auditorium shall be visible to the real spectators, only the changing illumination which accompanies the Ballet making its performance apparent. Similarly, in accordance with Satan's remarks [...] none of the music must be audible, except the voice and drum of Heroism. Anything beyond this would necessarily be hideous, besides drowning or interrupting the dialogue.¹²³

Found on the final page of the play, Lee's 'Author's Note', rather perversely, instructs those performing *The Ballet* not to perform the ballet. Likewise, the Orchestra of Passions, or Patriotism, as it is known, is to be unheard by all, including the audience. That Lee uses the balletic art-form is curious: especially when the dance is described and not seen upon the stage. It is possible that Lee was influenced by Igor Stravinsky's infamous ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* or *The Rite of Spring* first performed in Paris on May 29, 1913. It is also possible that Lee knew of Vaslav Nijinsky—Lee's close friend John Singer Sargent had sketched the dancer in 1911—and his choreography for the ballet. There are resonances between *The Rite of Spring* and *The Ballet*, in particular *Le Sacrifice* in which 'The Chosen One', in this instance a young girl (not the young boy Heroism), is danced to death in the *Danse sacrée*. *The Rite of Spring* was, according to Pieter C. van den Toorn, inspired by primitivism, a 'loosely aligned succession of imagined prehistoric rites [...] to depict a series of primitive ceremonies'.¹²⁴ These thematic similarities suggest that Lee may have been influenced by news of the infamous performance, but, like the Audience of Nations in *The Ballet*, Lee was not privy to the shocking movements of the dancers or musical score of *The Rite*. Lee was almost certainly in Italy during the period

¹²¹ Lee, *Satan the Waster*, p. 31. Naming the theatre *The World* has resonances of Shakespeare's *The Globe* in London.

¹²² Ibid., unnumbered page after frontispiece.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 57.

¹²⁴ Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Stravinsky and The Rite of Spring: The Beginnings of a Musical Language* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 3.

of *The Rite's* performance.¹²⁵ But scandalous news travels far and wide, and *The Rite's* dancer, Diaghilev lived in Florence, and moved in the same circles as Lee.¹²⁶

The amalgamation of rite and dance are also evident in *Ancient Art and Ritual*. Harrison notes that art and ritual are seen as opposing forms of human expression; the 'rigidly prescribed ordinances of a church or sect' and art 'free in thought and untrammelled by convention and practice', but Harrison argues, it is 'the same impulse that sends a man to church and the theatre' for Athenian citizens of the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries B. C., the theatre is holy ground, attendance becomes worship and is socially obligatory: it is a theatre for memorial and celebration days during which, Harrison notes, 'the whole city was in a state of unwonted sanctity, under a *taboo*'.¹²⁷ Harrison suggests that on the eve of the performance, the image of the god would be brought into the theatre, sanctifying the space and the performance. *The Ballet's* central theme must therefore be questioned: is Lee bringing her reader to worship at the theatre of warfare and violence, or pacifism? By aligning *The Ballet* with the ancient Greek ceremonial theatre rite, Crawley's war dance and contagion of primitive emotion, and Armfield's art for art's sake illustrations, is she acknowledging that war is an anachronistic and unnecessary revenant from humanity's pre-history and early civilizations?

The frontispiece of Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual* (Figure 2) contains two Corinthian style columns, topped with acanthus leaves, with a marble frieze being supported by the columns. The illustration is Hellenic in style, and echoes one of Harrison's periods of study within the text. This Williams and Norgate frontispiece is reproduced in each of the Home University Library of Modern Knowledge series, but there is a similarity between it and that of the illustrated *The Ballet of Nations* (see Figure 3). The framing of the main textual aspect bears a subtle resemblance, but rather than the Corinthian columns, the title frieze is held aloft by two naked figures, one male and one female. The male figure, an Atlas without his globe, is sinuous with taut muscles, the female modestly covers her breasts. As *The Ballet* progresses, the columned structure is replaced by a proscenium arch, heavily patterned in the geometric style.

The performance of the Orchestra of Patriotism includes figures who are personifications of emotional states; the Passions. These include Self-Interest, Widow

¹²⁵ Lee's letter dated May 25—four days prior to the performance of *The Rite of Spring*—to Carlo Placci was sent from Palmerino.

¹²⁶ Richard Buckle, *Diaghilev* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, Ltd., 1979), Maurice Baring and Lady Ottoline Morrell, p. 233, 475.

¹²⁷ Harrison, p. 9, 10, 12.

Fear and her daughters Suspicion and Panic ‘wrapped in yesterday’s *Daily Mail* and *Globe*’, Lady Idealism and Prince Adventure:

There came also Death’s mother (or wife, for their family relations are primitive and not best inquired into) [...] With her came her well-known crew, Rapine, Lust, Murder and Torture, fitted out with bull-roarers and rattles and other cannibalish instruments.¹²⁸

Surprising though it may be in this context, Lee seems to draw in the ‘The Ballet’ upon Crawley’s study of the instincts of primitive peoples, religion and marriage. Crawley specifically notes that the bull-roarer is a primitive instrument, a ‘downright oddity’ and integral to fertility rites. It is, simply, a thin piece of wood, with a long cord attached and swung in a circular motion. Lengthening or shortening the cord changes the vibrated sound produced by the instrument, enabling communication via tonal differences. The bull-roarer’s ubiquity is also noted by Marett in *Anthropology* as something that might be easily be invented once only and almost immediately dropped again’, but ‘it is all over the world’ and goes back to the most ancient times.¹²⁹ Marett argues the instrument has ceremonial significance, a ‘mystic purpose’.¹³⁰ Crawley’s *The Tree of Life* argues for the link between the bull-roarer and primitive socio-religious ritual, he posits that the Urabunna tribe believe the noise omitted by the bull-roarer is the voice of the spirit Witurna.¹³¹ In Central Australia the bull-roarer, or the *churinga*—meaning sacred—is the source of transmission of the vital principle ‘from their ancestors through generation after generation’.¹³² Each tribe treasures the sacred bull-roarer or *churinga* ‘like heirlooms and regalia’: they play an integral part in intergenerational communication and ceremony.¹³³ That the bull-roarer is so entwined with Crawley’s transmission of vitality and sacred knowledge makes it (in Crawley’s eyes) a primitive precursor to Christian religious artefacts. But Lee acerbically attacks Crawley’s opinions on the sacredness of the bull-roarer in ‘Anthropological Apologetics’ using his own argument from the *The Tree of Life* to justify her point. She quotes: ‘that the spirit creature whom up to that time he has regarded as all-powerful is merely myth, and that such a being does not really exist, and is only an invention of the men to frighten the women and children’.¹³⁴ Her final line ‘So let this be the last but not least lesson of comparative mythology and its sacred bull-

¹²⁸ Lee, *Satan the Waster*, pp. 36-37.

¹²⁹ Marett, pp. 126-127.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 127.

¹³¹ Crawley, *The Tree of Life*, p. 192.

¹³² Ibid., p.214.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 208.

¹³⁴ Lee, *Vital Lies: II*, p. 58.

roarer!’ suggests that it is not only those primitive women and children confounded by the supposed spiritual powers of the bull-roarer, but contemporary anthropologists as well.¹³⁵ So why include the bull-roarer in ‘The Ballet’?

In their anxiety to prove that religious beliefs, specified or unspecified, are desirable and indispensable, our apologists ignore that the essence of a religious belief is that it should be held to be true [...] And they will cease to be *held as true* so soon as it is understood that they originate not in Divine revelation but in the jumbled abortive thoughts and panic-ridden rituals of savage men.¹³⁶

That this instrument is tied to musicality and divine communication is apt, considering its place in Lee’s orchestra of Patriotism.

THE MUSE (Pulling out her tablets resumes writing). So the Ballet proceeded; but for this to continue it was necessary to keep up the music of the Orchestra of Passions which sat, in the enclosure marked ‘Patriotism,’ around the slippery and reeking stage: Jealousy, Greed, Loyalty, Chivalry, Comradeship, Reverence, Discipline, Routine; Ennui and Egotism; Justice, Prejudice with Pugnacity and Bullying; Widow Fear with her nimble children, Suspicion and Panic, playing on penny-whistles, fog-horns and that mediaeval tocsin-bell in its wrapper of newspapers; Idealism and Adventure, that splendid pair blowing their silver trumpet and woodland horn; Hatred, who never ceased tuning up at the harmonium of Self-Righteousness; Sin, whom the Wise Gods call Disease, and her classic crew, Rapine, Lust and Murder, with their bull-roarers and rattles; Science and Organization seated a little apart, for none of their old established allegoric companions could bear their new-fangled instruments, but whose gramophone and pianola brayed and strummed away unflaggingly.¹³⁷

The three systems of human thought as defined by Freud in ‘Totem and Taboo’ are in evidence here: the *animistic* or *mythological* is represented by ‘Sin, whom the Wise Gods call Disease, and her classic crew, Rapine, Lust and Murder, with their bull-roarers and rattles’, the *religious* mode by ‘Widow Fear with her nimble children, Suspicion and Panic, playing on penny-whistles, fog-horns and that mediaeval tocsin-bell’, and the *scientific* with ‘Science and Organization’ whose ‘gramophone and pianola brayed and strummed away unflaggingly’.¹³⁸

It is this introduction of Madame Science (‘wearing a laboratory smock’) and Organisation (dressed like ‘a clerk in a public office’) which throws the Orchestra into turmoil. Death attempts to remove the new-comers, shouting ‘[k]nock them down!

¹³⁵ Lee, *Satan the Waster*, p. 58.

¹³⁶ Lee, *Vital Lies: II*, p. 39.

¹³⁷ Lee, *Satan the Waster*, p. 54.

¹³⁸ Freud, ‘Totem and Taboo’, p. 77.

Trample on them! Don't you see they are aliens? Spies? Spies in the service of Life and Progress?'¹³⁹ But Satan assures his players 'Nothing could be more conducive to the success of our Ballet'.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, he reprimands Death, calling him a 'senseless old relic of the Stone Age, with your rabble of instruments fit for an ethnological museum'.¹⁴¹ Continuing to Science and Organisation, Satan jokes at Death's expense, 'you know the ways of skeletons; their skulls are invariably empty'.¹⁴² Death, once worshipped by the primitive individual, has been superseded by the worship of science and organisation. His artefacts—the bull-roarers and other instruments—are fit for little more than storage in a museum cabinet. In suggesting Science and Organisation are familiar with empty skulls implies an alliance with the ethnological and anthropological disciplines and the collection and study of skulls. As Lee's 'Epilogue' to 'The Ballet' in *Satan the Waster* shows, the Manufacturers have a keen interest in the heads of their slaves:

1ST MANUFACTURER (solemnly). Sir, this illustrious geographer here will inform you that there exist, not very far from our seas and in close contact with some of those colonies which spread our civilization, a Nation of Negroes...

PROFESSOR (bows and pulls MS. Out of his pocket). Negroes now subjects of the Queen of Sheba, but whom monolithic monuments there show to have been under the influence of our ancestors of the later Stone Age; moreover, pronouncedly Brachycephalous and...¹⁴³

The Manufacturers hope to colonize and enslave the Negro (once again), to force them into industry and to populate military effectives. This is agreed with the Prelate who argues using the Negro in the army is 'the simplest way of giving additional souls to Christ'.¹⁴⁴ The Professor's repeated focus on the form of the Negro head and the links to the Stone Age allude to the earlier discourse between Satan, Death and Science and Organisation, and reiterate Lee's anxiety regarding scientific polygenism, and by extension her family's connections with the slave trade. It is, as Lee notes in the Preface to Volume I of *Vital Lies*, that science will be used to validate or invalidate its own ideological imperatives, be that slavery, patriotism, war, or the furthering of a religious fundamentalism.

¹³⁹ Lee, *Satan the Waster*, p. 37

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 78. Brachycephaly is the flattened back of the head combined with bulging forehead. This aspect of physiological variance is described by Karl Pearson in *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in Evolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1897) where he splits his study in to four sections: Ancient Civilizations, Lower Races, Ancient Celts and Teutons and Modern Civilizations. Lee read works by Pearson, and corresponded with him in 1888 regarding population control and eugenics.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

Indeed, the Orchestra of Patriotism is to be kept lit and stoked by Satan's lackeys:

The members of the Orchestra of Patriotism are therefore urgently requested to replenish their energies by unstinting use of the appropriate refreshments, carefully warmed up commonplaces and fiery drams of eloquence, which will be handed round unceasingly by Lord Satan's lackeys of the Press and Pulpit.¹⁴⁵

Lee's 'Ballet' suggests that it is the mediation of the Press and the Pulpit that fuels the fire of Patriotism, the personified traits of the Orchestra amalgamate under the insidious influence of religion and war propaganda. Once a player falls under the influence of Patriotism, they themselves become a source of contagion: 'For however pure you enter into it, the Dance of Ballet Master Death brings you to contamination and barrenness'.¹⁴⁶ In this sense the contagion is continually perpetuated: Ballet-Master Death acknowledges this 'truth':

Let me remind you that [...] you are about to take part in the vastest and most new-fashioned spectacle of slaughter and Ruin I have so far had the honour of putting onto the World's Stage, although I hope that its attractions may cause it to become only the first and only the least considerable of a long and incessant series of similar glorious exhibitions of what mankind can do under my guidance [...]
And the Human Passions, however self-engrossed and often at loggerheads, are always eager to accept the unique opportunity for untrammelled manifestations of their violence which is afforded by the symphonies of Patriotism.¹⁴⁷

The Human Passions, no longer able to suppress the overriding blood lust are convinced to join Death's incessant series of violent actions. Taboo is rendered ineffectual, Passions which were once individual personifications of emotions assume a unity and a tribal identity: Patriotism becomes the collective identifier of this savage grouping. For Marianna Torgovnick this ritual performance of violent togetherness and the subsequent slip into primitivism is an act she considers would be celebrated by anthropologist Harrison. Torgovnick argues that '[n]ow as in the past, the desire for community, spirituality, and the wholeness of the group leads to ritual [...] Much as in the second and third decades of this century, we today feel the need of ritual and want to access again its power'.¹⁴⁸ This suggestion of a desire for ancient ritual as a source of power—as in Harrison—alongside the interplay between Crawley's anthropological ideas and the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴⁸ Marianna Torgovnick, 'Discovering Jane Harrison', in *Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature*, eds. Carola M. Kaplan and Anne B. Simpson (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 131-148 (p. 143).

Orchestra of Patriotism enable scholarship of ‘The Ballet’ to take a new direction. ‘The Ballet’ embodies the imagery of contemporary anthropology in a way that places Lee firmly on the ethnological side of the debate, with Jane Harrison and *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) in opposition.

Whilst seemingly distant from the stratigraphic models discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, I would like to suggest that this chapter utilizes stratification in multiple ways, most notably with the linear transmission of heritable characteristics in the family tree, akin to the scholar’s copy book. Lee’s belief in a monogenic origin for humanity—as opposed to polygenic—suggests a way in which social and cultural transcendence can occur. Within a monogenic species, there exists slight differences (racial and nationalistic), yet Lee’s cosmopolitan, pacifist, and anti-slavery perspective cuts across these (stratified) boundaries, promoting a blotting-book recognition and de-familiarization of humankind.

Chapter IV

The Maniac-Frown and a Schone Seele

I have collected more physiognomical knowledge from shades alone than from every other kind of portrait; have improved physiognomical sensation more by the sight of them than by the contemplation of ever mutable nature.¹

-Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy* (1797)

John Graham defines physiognomy as the ‘ancient art or science of judging an interior reality by external experience’.² This description immediately establishes physiognomy as a stratigraphical art or science: the superficial reading of the facial characteristics of an individual enables an understanding of the internal, the personality of the subject. The face becomes a text to be read and understood, and not only the face. Graham extends physiognomic study to include ‘passing expressions, bodily form, or posture’.³ Yet this reading relies upon a form of intertextuality: a face is given meaning from previous experience of other faces, and their underlying traits. This intertext may be from personal experience, or from a guide to the science, such as the *Essays on Physiognomy* by Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801). Lavater was a theologian, a pastor in Zurich’s Zwinglian church, and physiognomer. His reading of facial characteristics were informed by Biblical descriptions, personal experience and art.

In this chapter, I will argue that the scientific field of physiognomy is key to Lee’s interest in physiological responses to aesthetics, and thus the relationship between the writer (or artist) and the reader (or audience). Yet, the direct evidence of the intertext is absent: there is no record of Lee having read Lavater’s *Essays*, yet she clearly knew of Lavater, and visited and wrote about his house in *The Tower of the Mirrors*. Graham argues that ‘no literate person in England or France could have escaped knowing the work either directly or indirectly’, and Lee would most certainly have been aware of the physiognomic conventions.⁴

¹ Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy; Calculated to Extend the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, Volume I, trans. Rev. C Moore (London: H. D. Symonds, 1797), p. 269.

² John Graham, *Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy, A Study in the History of Ideas* (Berne, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishers Ltd, 1979), p. 35.

³ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

Vernon Lee's first meeting with the novelist Henrietta Jenkin is described in a letter sent home to her father. She writes that Jenkin

[...] is charming, literary, & without affection delightful, so cheery, hearty, friendly [...] She is tall, and not thin, how old impossible to say, her face being but little marked & not having a hair that is not light brown—Her features are very irregular, her mouth & nose largish, but her eyes very pretty—Her forehead is very large and immensely bombé.⁵

In response to Lee's description here, Shafquat Towheed suggests that '[s]uch features, at the time, were a certain phrenological indicator of independence and intelligence.'⁶ Indeed, Towheed uses Lee's reference to Mrs Henrietta Jenkin's features in his article 'Determining "Fluctuating Opinions": Vernon Lee, Popular Fiction, and Theories of Reading' (2005) to illustrate the fledgling novelist's 'interactions' with popular fiction writers, and her 'development as both a writer of fiction and a literary critic'.⁷ Despite touching briefly on the art of facial reading in this article, Towheed does not develop this line of enquiry. In fact, he implies (I believe, mistakenly) that Lee is here utilising the nineteenth-century 'pseudo-science' of 'phrenology'.⁸ During this period, both Lee and Jenkin appear to be keen readers of facial features (physiognomy), rather than the cranium (phrenology). Tellingly, in a letter to her father, Lee also notes:

She [Jenkin] is most kind and cordial—she made me sit quite close up to her, for the purpose of better studying my physiognomy, "because" said she, "that girl is just like what I was"—at which I am not a little surprised—⁹

Physiognomy is the scientific art which seeks to decode the personality of an individual from the physiological features of the face. For example, the largeness and domed quality of Jenkin's forehead represents great intelligence, due to the cranial capacity for a well-developed brain. Lee's introduction to Jenkin's husband, Captain Charles Jenkin, R. N., hastens her to attempt another physiognomic reading; he is a 'birdlike, or rather parrotlike personage' who believes himself to be rather grand and superior. Lee tells her 'Papa' he is vain, 'foolish' and liable to engage in 'senseless and vulgar prattle'.¹⁰ Not only does he resemble the parrot facially, but he behaves like one too. Physiognomy's focus on

⁵ Vernon Lee, to Henry Paget, June 16, 1870, in *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee 1856-1935: The Pickering Masters Series, Volume I, 1856-1884*. ed. Amanda Gagel and Sophie Geoffroy (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

⁶ Shafquat Towheed 'Determining "Fluctuating Opinions"', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 60, 2 (September 2005), 199-236 (p. 205).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁹ Vernon Lee, to Henry Paget, July 16-21, 1870, Gagel and Geoffroy (pp.19-21), p. 20.

¹⁰ Vernon Lee, to Henry Paget, June 22, 1870, Gagel and Geoffroy, pp. 12-13.

determining ‘character’—the mental and moral qualities distinct to an individual—allows for a reading that claims to be both scientific and subjective. Captain Jenkin’s ‘parrotlike personage’ draws on an objective reading of the qualities of his facial features, expression, form and posture and aligns them with Lavater’s anthropomorphized (and moral) classification.¹¹ It is these focused moments of description, these examinations of facial features—either presented as an artistic or literary portrait—within Lee’s work which will be examined within this chapter. In drawing examples from Lee’s short stories ‘Winthrop’s Adventure’ from the collection *For Maurice* (1881), ‘Oke of Okehurst’ from *Hauntings* (1886), and the essay ‘Lavater’s House at Zurich’ from *The Tower of the Mirrors* (1914), this chapter will chart Lee’s exploration of physiognomic discourse within her own work, drawing on Lavater’s four volumes of the *Essays on Physiognomy; Calculated to Extend the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*. Lavater’s work *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beforderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (published in numerous volumes between 1775-1778) argues that in most instances it is possible to ‘reveal the interior’ person from the outer self, suggesting a harmony between the internal and external strata of the human character. Whilst the ‘present is the key to the past’ does not map exactly onto physiognomy, the reading of the surface layer—in parallel to the archaeological site of Boni—reveals what lies beneath. In this case, the face and psychology exist simultaneously, yet it is the physical features that reveal the ‘truth’ of the individual. Yet this is problematic: the face is the Rorschach inkblot to be deciphered, but it reveals more about the individual deciphering than the blot itself. Lavater’s science of physiognomic reading is intertwined with his emotional feeling: he stresses that the ‘extreme sensibility’ of his nerves occasioned him ‘to feel certain emotions at beholding certain countenances’.¹² Lavater found that he had a ‘unique ability in portraiture’, with artistry enough to capture the ‘various proportions, features, similitudes, and varieties, of the human countenance’, and importantly he notes, ‘these persons were as similar in character as in feature’.¹³ Lee writes of the art of portraiture in her 1904 work, *Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Gardening of Life* that it is ‘an attempt to overcome space and baffle time; to imprison and use at pleasure the most fleeting, intangible, and uncommunicable of all mysterious essences, a human personality’.¹⁴ It is this fascination with likeness—

¹¹ In volume II of Johann Casper Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy; Calculated to Extend the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, Volume I, the author notes that the parrot has ‘a disposition to prattle’ (p. 115).

¹² Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* (1852), p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Vernon Lee, *Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Gardening of Life* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1904), p. 140.

both in feature and personality—that binds together Lavater, ‘Winthrop’s Adventure’ and ‘Oke of Okehurst’.

Lavater was also, according to Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, ‘the first student of human physiognomy to make a conscious decision not to think in general types’ attending to ‘an individual’s specific combination of facial characteristics’.¹⁵ For Koolhaas-Grosfeld this marks a clear proof that ‘the modern sense of personal identity’ did not start until the eighteenth century.¹⁶ What this means is that Lavater’s specific physiognomic study focused upon understanding the facial features individually; it attempted to provide a reading that brought together a multiplicity of evident traits. This fits with Lee’s approach to the earth sciences, and anthropology: the facial features—like the archaeological fragments—are read individually, and also considered in connection with the other features. Whilst the individual features exist on the same facial plane, the same stratigraphical layer, the face is not read in its entirety. It is the relationship between certain aspects of the visage that provide the reading, and those features relationship to other individual’s attributes.

Shoshana Felman in *Jaques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (1987) considers the psychoanalytic relationship between analyst and analysand as a *reading*, an act of interpretation of that which ‘the patient [analysand] says *beyond* what he has been incited to say’.¹⁷ Felman proposes (via Lacan) an extension of the reading beyond the analysand to include the analyst. She argues this is due to interpretation (reading) taking ‘place *on both sides* of the analytic situation’, revealing the unconscious as *both* the reader, and ‘*that which must be read*’.¹⁸ What this implies most radically, she says, is that ‘whoever reads, interprets out of his unconscious’ and is, therefore ‘an analysand, even when the interpreting is done from the position of the analyst’.¹⁹ In applying Felman’s theory to Lee’s work, I will substitute the analyst with the physiognomer—the reader of faces. In doing so, I hope to suggest how, in the case of Lee’s artist-narrators in ‘Winthrop’s Adventure’ and ‘Oke of Okehurst’, the artist/narrator/physiognomer/reader reveals both the psychology of their portrayed/read subject, and furthermore, reveals the reader’s own unconscious. Felman’s

¹⁵ Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, ‘Behind the Mask of Civility’, in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing Since the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker and Michael Mascuch (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 247-268 (p. 250).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

¹⁷ Shoshana Felman, *Jaques Lacan and the Adventures of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22

framework has a series of overlaps with Lee's own approach to writing. In her study of writing, *The Handling of Words* (1923), Lee suggests that it is the writer's duty to manipulate the contents—the palette—of the reader's mind to create meaning.²⁰ Therefore, each reader relies upon a stored accumulation of memories, which then respond to the triggers upon the page: Lee writes that '[o]f course all art depends as much upon memory as upon actuality; it lives as much, so to speak, in our past as in our present'.²¹ Each reader's reading is in essence then a portrait of their inner self, or as Felman argues, the *that* which acts as both the reader and that which must be read.

'Lavater's House' presents a reading of a shop window in Zurich that acknowledges the superseding of Lavater's ideas on physiognomy, but also their influence upon later scientific and social and cultural studies. 'Winthrop's Adventure' is a fine example of a physiognomic portrait reading, and the subsequent effect of this physiognomy on the viewer. 'Oke of Okehurst' uses the physiognomic shade to provide a reading that relies upon the reader's own interpretation; more-so than in Winthrop. This narrative exemplifies the shift from physiognomic reading—the study of facial features to reveal character and morality—to a psychological assessment of Alice, and the narrator/ reader.

Lee frequently engages with and references to Lavaterian physiognomy, and does so throughout her oeuvre. The works in the Harold Acton Archive provide many mediated examples of Lavaterian physiognomic studies. Henry G Atkinson & Harriet Martineau's *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* (1851) contains within its appendices an extract from the *Autobiography of Zschokke* in which a reading is given, using 'Lavater's physiognomy'.²² The Appendix extract, whilst drawing on physiognomical readings, is evidence of the already waning reputation of Lavater's science in the eyes of some. Atkinson states in 'Bacon on Matter and Causation' that '[i]n the conceit of their ignorance, they [men] anticipate nature, and pre-judge every novelty'.²³ Later works read by Lee and held at the British Institute suggest a more favourable response to Lavater's work. Henry Rutgers Marshall's work on psychology *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics* (1894), draws on the psychological pleasure derived by the viewer of beauty. Marshall engages with ugliness, using a method that echoes the Lavaterian: a reading of 'dread' which has

²⁰ Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923), p. 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²² Henry George Atkinson and Harriet Martineau, 'Lavater's Physiognomy', in *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* (London: J. Chapman, 1851), pp. 301- 306 (p. 304).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

its ‘own independent physiognomy [...] decidedly different from sorrow’.²⁴ Lee notes in the front cover that she finished reading this work in 1907.

Lee’s interest in aesthetics, the Renaissance, and Hellenic culture drew her to the works of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), via her close friend and mentor Walter Pater. Winckelmann was a German art historian and pioneering archaeologist whose work *A History of Art Amongst the Ancients* Lee refers to in her first major work *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880). Lee continued to draw upon his works in her writing on aesthetics (*Beauty and Ugliness*), travel (*Belcaro*, *Juvenilia*, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, and *The Golden Keys*), and historic fiction (*The Countess of Albany*, *Ottilie*).²⁵ Winckelmann was a contemporary of Lavater, and Lavater subscribed to his ideas on physiognomy.²⁶ Walter Pater’s work *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), included a short essay on Winckelmann, with Pater referring to a physiognomic reading of the historian by Lavater himself:

‘You know,’ says Lavater, speaking of Winckelmann’s countenance, ‘that I consider ardour and indifference by no means incompatible in the same character. If ever there was a striking instance of that union, it in the countenance before us.’²⁷

We can be certain Lee was familiar with this work of Pater’s as she writes of his ‘beautiful essay’ ‘Aucassin and Nicolette’ in her work *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Mediaeval in the Renaissance* (1884), which was also dedicated to Pater.²⁸ This multiplicity of influences certainly suggests an awareness on Lee’s behalf of the art of physiognomy and its most famous practitioner. This suggestion turns to certainty upon reading Lee’s work *The Tower of the Mirrors* (1914). The collection of travel essays includes ‘Lavater’s House at Zurich’, an autobiographical account of Lee’s visit to Zurich where, en route to the cathedral, she stumbles across the home previously tenanted by Johann Casper Lavater:

I had also had pointed out to me [...] another house in a widening behind the cathedral, where Goethe had been the guest, in his “Werther” days, of Parson Lavater, universally renowned for lofty gentleness of soul (“schöne Seele” they called it), and for science of physiognomy, whereby

²⁴ Henry Rutgers Marshall, *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics: and Essay Concerning the Psychology of Pain and Pleasure, with Special Reference to Aesthetics* (London: Macmillan, 1894), p. 75. Harold Acton Archive VL 111.85 MAR.

²⁵ Vernon Lee, *Beauty and Ugliness*, p. 2; *Belcaro*, p. 17, 20, 32, 55; *Juvenilia*, p. 52; *The Tower of the Mirrors*, ‘Lavater’s House at Zurich’, p. 86; *The Golden Keys* p. 50; *The Countess of Albany*, p. 24; *Ottilie*, p. 89, 97, 98.

²⁶ Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Face and Fortunes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 125.

²⁷ Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* ed. Matthew Beaumont. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 90-91.

²⁸ Vernon Lee, *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Mediaeval in the Renaissance* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1884), dedication, p. 133.

Guileless Virtue learned to shun Villainy's eyebrow and mistrust the Vulpine snout of the False Friend.²⁹

Lee acknowledges the 'universal' nature of his renown, his gentleness, and the positive way in which physiognomy was utilized. The translation of Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe—Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*—reveals Lavater's desire to seek for the best in humanity and his strong focus on the importance of morality within the physiognomic study.

The Parson Lavater

In 'Lavater's House at Zurich', Lee visits his second home in the city.

I sought [...] the other residence of Pastor Lavater, where he was killed by a stray shot from a French revolutionary musket; and where, as my Swiss friends dutifully reminded me, that same Goethe, returning twenty years later to Zurich, walked up and down in the street and turned on his heel, without entering, while poor Lavater watched him behind a shutter, and felt cut to the heart. For what sufficient reasons Goethe committed this particular piece of brutality my antiquarian Zurich friends entirely failed to satisfy me; this much only being intelligible, that Goethe had also written an epigram calling his old friend a scoundrel ("ein Schuft"), and that Lavater, with his pious high-mindedness and universally translated book on Physiognomy, had come to mean a 'left-behind standpoint' [...]³⁰

It appears, on a first reading, that Lee feels affection here towards Lavater, and is dismissive of Goethe's attitude towards the parson. Whilst the gentle soul of Lavater was no doubt saddened by Goethe's literal *volte face* in the street outside his home, feeling 'cut to the heart', Lee seems to suggest that Lavater should have seen Goethe's treachery coming: the 'science of physiognomy', of which he is master, should have alerted 'Guileless Virtue' (Lavater) to 'Villainy's eyebrow' and the 'Vulpine snout of the False Friend' (Goethe).³¹ For when the rest of Lavater's public had begun to dismiss physiognomy as pseudo-scientific nonsense, Goethe also deserted his friend as a *left-behind standpoint*.

²⁹ Vernon Lee, 'Lavater's House at Zurich', in *The Tower of the Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), pp. 69-75 (p. 69).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

³¹ Ibid., p. 69.

Whilst wandering in Zurich, and pondering Lavatar's mistreatment by Goethe, Lee stumbles across a book shop. She writes:

And I thought over "left-behind standpoints" in general, and those of Goethe and sundry other folks' in particular. And while thus moralizing in the summer rain, found myself in front of a bookseller's window at the lower end of that still and old-fashioned and leafy square. In Lavater's times there were no bookseller's [sic] windows [...] books were exhibited on tressels before the door in boxes.³²

The book shop has not remained untouched. Lee notices that there is a window, through which passers-by can peruse the titles on sale. Window glass would have been prohibitively expensive during Lavater's lifetime, so Lee presumes the books would be displayed lay out on tables, or in boxes by the door. Lee's contemporaries are now blessed with the benefit of novel arrangements in book-retailer's windows, drawing in the reader, or warning him off, should the books not be to his taste. Like Lavater's physiognomy, the bookseller's window enables the reader to comprehend if this bookshop will provide textual satisfaction. Lee, avid reader as she was, takes time to peruse the works in the store:

In the window of this modern bookseller [...] were spread out the latest additions to German and European literature and science. There were books on modern art (*Jugendstil*—what *would* Goethe have thought of these slimy and vermicular patterns?), on modern diseases, modern vices, on Symbolists and Decadents and Pragmatists and Modernists, on the Mutation Theory of De Vries, on Physiological Psychology, on Aeroplanes and Aviation; on "Blouses"—and the book thereof—"Das Blusenbuch" [...] And it occurred to me: Could but that riding-coated hessian-booted Olympian ghost return this evening, in the melancholy rain—return not for me to see him, but for him to look, over my shoulder, into the window of that modern bookshop [...]³³

The window is dressed with works of modernity: modern art, modern diseases, modern vices, modern literary movements, modern science, modern psychology, modern technology, modern fashions. Lee wishes Goethe could travel forward in time—like a 'hessian-booted' Helen of Troy—not to seduce Lee (for this he had already done with his literary works), but to glance into the window of the bookseller's on Lavater's street.³⁴ She continues: [...] there is the Book of the Blouse, *Blusenbuch*, in the window. Also, a good deal about *das Weib*, Woman, in biology, sociology, neurology, criminology, and

³² Ibid., p. 71.

³³ Ibid., pp. 71-2.

³⁴ Lee includes references to J. W Goethe in most of her published works, with *Faust* appearing in *Gospels of Anarchy* (p. 16, 40), *Belcaro* (p. 74, 122), *Baldwin* (p. 7, 188, 270, 358, 372), *Louis Norbert* (p. 266), *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (p. 287), *Euphorion* (p. 121, 233), and *Proteus* (p. 4).

other *ologies*, still unsuspected in Lavater's days.³⁵ Thus, Lee alludes to the progress made in the period between Lavater's publication of *Fragmente* and her visit to Zurich in the early twentieth century. Even with Goethe's foresight, Lee suggests that 'all the genius of Goethe would never have foretold the change in the pace in which change itself was going'.³⁶ Lavater's ideas had become superseded during his own lifetime. Lee draws on Faust to conclude:

Imagine, on the other hand, if after that promenade at Lavater's, that unkind, self-righteous walk, Goethe could have been led by his own Mephistopheles to that bookshop, and spent a magic hour in it, not like his hero, in the Past, but in the Future [...]³⁷

Lee's lamentations are for Lavater's ill-treatment, but also perhaps in part of the great Goethe, who failed to identify the positive work of the codifier of physiognomy. All that which is modern in the window of the bookshop is dependent on the superseded works within their field that have gone before. Lee considers 'sociology, neurology, criminology' as examples: each of these fields have been bolstered by the thought of Lavater, and his work of physiognomy. Both Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquent* (1876)—the founding work of criminology/ criminal sociology—and Max Nordau's *Entartung* (1892) were heavily influenced by Lavater's ideas. Wilhelm Max Wundt's *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (1874) developed Lavater's ideas into neurophysics and neuropsychology, whilst the de Vries mutation theory considers the inheritance of specific traits (albeit in primroses, not in human offspring). Whilst Lavater's reading of physiognomy was to become what Lee called a left-behind standpoint within his own lifetime, his theories provided a foundation for the multiple new disciplines. It is the transition between physiognomy and psychology that I will consider in the following examples from Lee's oeuvre.

'Winthrop's Adventure'

Lee's letters to her father in 1880 (age fourteen) clearly show an early awareness of physiognomy which was, albeit unconsciously, tied into her desire to be a successful writer. For Lee, being such a *successful* subject of a facial analysis by Jenkin—her features and ambitions were in harmony—cemented physiognomical description as a suitable way

³⁵ Lee, 'Lavater's House', p. 73.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

to narrativize personality within her imaginative work. Lee's interest in art and portraiture provided practice at reading, and at presenting, facial description. Lee's *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880), her highly acclaimed study of Italian art, is the first of her many works which utilizes a form of physiognomical reading to embellish the historic portraits under consideration. In the chapter 'The Musical Life' Lee follows in the footsteps of Charles Burney (1726-1814). Burney's interest in the musician Farinelli is focussed on Lee, but she contemplates the singer's appearance in his many portraits, rather than Burney's fascination with his musicality. Lee suggests the myth of Farinelli's influence is shown by the 'pageant-like' images, which are 'colossal, dark, uncanny, mysterious' and 'filled with vague forms of elves and genii'.³⁸ Yet, when the 'sphinx-like demigod' surround is removed, the 'seasoning' and 'spicing' of his image is ignored, Farinelli still retained a singular attraction to the viewer.³⁹ Lee notes that Burney, on meeting the singer, recognized the power Farinelli had over him, and others: Farinelli made 'men's hearts open instinctively to him' and in his individuality 'lay the real explanation of his singular career'.⁴⁰ Readers of *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* may have recognized the description of Farinelli just one year later, when reading Lee's short story 'Winthrop's Adventure; or, A Culture Ghost', which was published in *Fraser's Magazine* (January 1881). It was then reproduced in Lee's *For Maurice*, a collection of tales dedicated to Maurice Baring, for the disappointment of *Belcaro, Being Essays on Aesthetical Subjects* (1880). Baring had been a fan of *The Prince of the Hundred Soups: a Puppet Show in Narrative by Vernon Lee* (1880) and had eagerly purchased Lee's second publication.⁴¹ Unfortunately for Baring, *Belcaro* was a book of essays on aesthetic questions, not delightful and amusing folk stories. Yet, as so often, we see in these two examples that she engages with this historical personage in multiple ways; as academic study, and a springboard for fictive writing. The history of Farinelli becomes a palimpsest, Lee overwrites his narrative on multiple occasions. Lee's descriptions of Farinelli's 'singularity' are at odds with the multiple uses to which she puts his physiognomy.

Writing to Mrs Jenkin—of the bombé forehead—on October 2, 1874, Lee suggests the influence for Winthrop's supernatural adventure:

I told you in my last letter that I had thoughts of jotting down my impressions of Bologna, which, I had no doubt, might be made into

³⁸ Vernon Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, second edition, illustrated with a new preface (Chicago, IL: A. C. McClurg & Co. 1908), p. 175.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 175.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

⁴¹ Vernon Lee, *The Prince of the Hundred Soups: a Puppet Show in Narrative by Vernon Lee* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1880).

something interesting. I have begun doing so and I find that I have far more curious and picturesque materials than I had thought. I am fond of writing descriptions of places and sketches of persons or things I meet, so I daresay I might succeed tolerably in some such thing.⁴²

The narrative is loosely based upon a visit to Bologna Lee shared with John Singer Sargent in 1872. Rinaldi's description matches that of a painting of Farinelli which belonged to Lady Templemore. Fifty-five years later, *Country Life* (1927) reproduced Farinelli's image (p. xxv) triggering Lee's renewed interest in 'Winthrop's Adventure', and prompting publication in *For Maurice*.⁴³ Both Lee and Sargent felt intoxicated by Templemore's portrait of Farinelli, and she noted that the portrait appeared to them as a 'serpent, sphinx, wizard': tempting, enigmatic, mystical; 'sphinx' being a descriptor Lee used for the portrait in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century in Italy*.⁴⁴ So enamoured was Lee with the portrait that not only did Farinelli's countenance inspire 'A Culture Ghost; or, Winthrop's Adventure', but also Lee's 'A Wicked Voice', published in *Hauntings, and Other Fantastic Tales* (1890). Farinelli's portrait becomes an intertextual thread drawing the four works (including *Studies in the Eighteenth Century in Italy*) together, and whilst Farinelli is of course famed for his voice, both texts are equally interested in *visual* images. The structure and subject of 'Winthrop's Adventure' is one of the first and last (because it was written in 1881 and published in 1927) works within Lee's corpus that presents physiognomic reading. The narration presents the personality of the historical figure of Farinelli as Rinaldi via physiognomic tropes, and, equally aims at providing insight into the narrator's unconscious. It is the reading of Farinelli the analysand, by Rinaldi the analyst, that reveals, according to Felman's framework, the unconscious of Rinaldi.⁴⁵

'Winthrop's Adventure' begins with the young painter (Winthrop, both our analyst and analysand) travelling Italy to develop his 'love of the picturesque'. On his travels, he meets an eccentric and elderly collector of musical instruments, whom he befriends. The collector shows Winthrop a painting of the tenor Rinaldi (based on the portrait of Farinelli), who had been murdered by a jealous husband. Winthrop is enchanted by the portrait, and returns to the collector's house many times to view it, often in secret. On his last night in Lombardy, Winthrop decides to visit the scene of Rinaldi's murder, and upon getting caught in storm he decides to remain where he is and bed down in the now deserted house. During the night, the ghost of Rinaldi appears at

⁴² Vernon Lee, to Henrietta Jenkin. October 2, 1874, Gagel and Geoffroy, pp. 176-177.

⁴³ Vernon Lee, *For Maurice: Five Unlikely Stories* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1927), p. xxv.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxxvii.

⁴⁵ Felman, p. 22.

the piano, and recites a haunting piece of music. Bewitched by the song, Winthrop quietly watches, only for the ghost of Rinaldi's murderer to appear and stab the musical spectre to 'death'. Frightened at this supernatural violence, Winthrop runs from the scene but in the darkness tumbles over a step and hits his head. In the morning when he regains consciousness, Winthrop believes this all to have been a dream.

One year later, Winthrop is staying at a villa in Bellosguardo. His hostess decides to share an unusual piece of music she has discovered, which was buried under lumber, in a deserted outbuilding. As she sings the melody, Winthrop begins to feel faint, other guests notice he is disturbed or sick: the music is the same he heard in Rinaldi's deserted home. On challenging the hostess about the manuscript sheet of music, she explains it is a unique piece, as verified by a musicologist. There could be no earthly way of Winthrop having heard the music anywhere else.

Vineta Colby feels that '[t]he early "Winthrop's Adventure" is not particularly interesting as a ghost story', with its only charm being its 'many digressions [...] of summer in Lombardy'.⁴⁶ However, its interest at least partly lies in its treatment of Farinelli's/ Rinaldi's physiognomy. For not only did Farinelli's visage inspire 'Winthrop's Ghost' and 'A Wicked Voice', but in Lee's later introduction to 'Winthrop' in *For Maurice*, she suggests that Farinelli was also the inspiration for Diego in 'Ariadne in Mantua'. She writes: '[t]o wit: this famous singer Farinelli [...] who after dispelling with his songs the melancholia of one dotty king of Spain, Phillip V, became as indispensable to the somewhat feeble-minded Ferdinand VI [...]'.⁴⁷

Winthrop's first encounter of the painting is described thus:

The features were irregular and small, with intensely red lips and crimson flush beneath the transparent bronzed skin; the eyes were slightly upturned and looking sideways, in harmony with the turn of the head and parted lips, and they were beautiful, brown, soft, like those of some animals, with a vague wistful depth of look [...] The face was not beautiful, it had something at once sullen and effeminate, something odd and not entirely agreeable; yet it attracted and riveted your attention with its dark, warm colour, rendered all the more striking for the light, pearly, powdered locks, and the general lightness and haziness of touch.⁴⁸

The face shares in many ways the irregular features of the intelligent and independent character of Mrs. Jenkin. Despite the oddness and mildly disagreeable nature of the face,

⁴⁶ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee, A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, VA, & London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 244-245.

⁴⁷ Lee, *For Maurice*, p. xxx.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

there is a sense of ‘harmony’—perhaps a suggestion of Rinaldi’s musicality—and an unconventional attractiveness. The eyes of the portrait sitter are ‘beautiful, brown, like those of some animals’: yet there is no further clarification. The painterly viewer—Winthrop—is entranced, enchanted by the work. The vagueness of description, the haziness of the artistic rendering, is deliberately counter to the prescriptiveness of physiognomical study: Winthrop refuses to say ugly—the ‘face was not beautiful’—and on more than one occasion it had *something* about it, but something indescribable. The physiognomical signs are evident in the portrait, and the narrator’s reading of the face begins with clarity; ‘the features were irregular and small’. Yet the longer Winthrop spends looking at the painting, the more he feels its effect, the easier it becomes to translate the emotional character of the work; ‘sullen and effeminate’, and ‘attractive’ but not beautiful. Peculiarly, the expression is rapturous and enrapturing: the parted red lips, the upturned face and sideways glance, the blush of the cheeks and the wistful look suggest a sitter caught in the act of a sigh, or perhaps a moment of ecstasy. The parted and crimson lips suggest sexuality, the dark eyes a doe-eyed melancholy: symbolic of potent sensuality and gentle passivity. Lavater had recognized that:

The tameness of granivorous animals and beasts of burden is shown by the long, the pairing, and the in-bent lines [of the skull] for example [...] the deer [...]. The in-bent lines, from the eye-bones to the nostrils [...] indicate patient suffering.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Winthrop does not gender the face in the portrait, it is simply ‘the face’. From the extract it could be presumed Winthrop is reading the face of a beautiful young woman (effeminate, red lips). In the key work on Lee and psychoanalytic theory; *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee’s Supernatural Tales* (2008) Patricia Pulham argues that Rinaldi—the model for Farinelli’s portrait—was in all certainty castrato.⁵⁰ Whilst Winthrop never acknowledges Rinaldi’s position as castrato, the reading of his features as un-gendered or effeminate, suggests that Lee was aware of the great singer’s sexual immaturity, and covertly alluded to his liminal gender status. For Pulham, the castrato as a Winnicottian transitional art object facilitates a move from, and conversely to a maternal space. This provides Lee with the opportunity to experiment with different gendered and sexed identities. The art object has parallels with my own reading of the fragment

⁴⁹ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* (1852), p. 210.

⁵⁰ Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee’s Supernatural Tales* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 12-13.

(Chapter II) or the physiognomic feature. In thinking of Lee's Lavetarian analysis of Farinelli—using Felman, via Lacan—Lee becomes the analysand rather than Farinelli.

Winthrop's multiple visits to Rinaldi's portrait are automatic: 'The face had a beauty, a curious irregular beauty, and in those deep, soft eyes there was something like a magnetic power, which I felt, and which others must have felt before me'.⁵¹ The curious desire to return is a 'magnetic' force. It suggests differing poles of attraction; again, perhaps an allusion to the male castrato, who has been made effeminate. Not only has this compulsion to view Rinaldi overcome Winthrop, but curiously Lee too is drawn into this repetitive cycle of viewing and reproduction of Farinelli's/ Rinaldi's portrait (in *Studies*, 'Winthrop', 'Ariadne'. 'Wicked Voice', *For Maurice*). Furthermore, the magnetic power, which is 'felt' by the narrator suggests that this response is not of artistic analysis, but a personal, emotional response; not to the artwork, but to the personality it contains.

Lavater stresses the sensual and emotional effect of physiognomy: he writes

at first sight of certain faces, I sometimes felt an emotion which did not subside for a few moments after the removal of the object; but I knew not then the cause and did not even attend to the Physiognomy which produced it.⁵²

Whilst this fledgling emotional response was at first reliant on a face-to-face reading, the skill strengthened and developed with practice. Consequently, the physiognomer was able to apply readings to silhouettes, etchings, and paintings, as they developed and honed their technique, just as Winthrop read and had an emotional response to the portrait of Rinaldi. Indeed, Lavater utilized etchings and silhouettes to illustrate examples of his physiognomic practice, and he considered that portrait art was scientific proof of analysis:

Observe the painter, is not his art founded on the very essence of physiognomy? I shall say no more of it: the thing speaks for itself, and must confound the pretended unbelievers in Physiognomy.⁵³

That the portrait should reveal not only the physical likeness of the individual, but also provide the essence of the sitter's self—the 'character and emotion'—was as important to Lee as to Lavater. Yet this too was in the act of reading: the face must be read and interpreted, through study and knowledge of the art of physiognomy, before the secrets of the morals and character of the sitter are revealed. Lee's statement from *Hortus Vitae* that a portrait should be 'an attempt to overcome space and baffle time; to imprison and use at pleasure the most fleeting, intangible, and uncommunicable of all mysterious

⁵¹ Lee, *For Maurice*, p. 163.

⁵² Lavater, *Volume I*, p. ix.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

essences, a human personality' suggests that a portrait imprisons the character and appearance of its sitter.⁵⁴ There is a power-play and pleasure evident here: the reader/viewer's gratification in looking and deciphering. For the sitter, a pleasure in being observed, fixed and decoded. But in choosing to unravel the mysteries of certain physiognomic traits (the sullen effeminate eyes and crimson lips) and leave others unread (Rinaldi's gender) the reader reveals his unconscious desires. There is the magnetic force between the portrait and its viewer, which is stated clearly. But that which is not stated—the attraction and resistance to Farinelli as a sexual subject—that illustrates Felman's 'refusal of information', brought about by 'inner resistances' that suggests obsession or psychosis.⁵⁵ The inner resistance is 'an imperative to exclude from consciousness' that is an 'active dynamic of negation'. In refusing to read and decode the features of the painting through a Lavertarian discourse, the reader of the painting is in fact confirming those previous readings.⁵⁶

With Lee's career-long intellectual focus on art and aesthetics, the analysis of the portrait in 'Winthrop's Adventure' might well seem to be a precursor to Lee's work on physiological aesthetics, namely *Beauty and Ugliness*. This essay was featured in *The Contemporary Review* (1897) and studies examples of emotional responses to artistic works. Co-authored by Lee and her partner Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, the essay documents a series of gallery experiments which monitor the physiological fluctuations of breath, heart-beat, and pupil, and also the recollection of memory as altered by engagement with art. These experiments certainly share the hallmarks of Winthrop's involvement with the painting of Rinaldi. In fact, Anstruther-Thomson embodies the space within the text (*Beauty and Ugliness*) that is occupied by the narrator Winthrop: Lee is watching (and documenting); Kit (and Winthrop) sensually engage with the object. Similarly, Rinaldi and Winthrop share a biological gender, as do Kit and Lee. Yet despite the similarities between Winthrop's physiognomic study and Kit and Lee's psychological aesthetics, these studies of art differ in focus. In 'Winthrop', the reading is limited to the face, occasionally the body, and not the complete work, and is therefore a specifically physiognomic study. For example, Lee writes in 'Anthropomorphic Aesthetics', in the extended version of *Beauty and Ugliness* (1912):

Or take a portrait, say by Van Eyck or Rembrandt. It may strike us as ugly when we recognize it as the face of a human being, and endow it with its associated peculiarities of disagreeable texture, poor health, and

⁵⁴ Lee, *Hortus Vitae*, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Felman, p. 79.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Lee applies the artistic reader trope once more in ‘Oke of Okehurst; or, A Phantom Lover’. The unnamed artist in this fantastic tale, is, like the portrait of Farinelli, tied to John Singer Sargent.⁵⁹ The American painter, a long-time friend of Lee, was ensconced in a scandal surrounding his painting *Madame X* after its display at the Paris Salon in 1884. Sargent’s painting, a portrait of socialite Virginie Gautreau, was preceded by over thirty preparatory sketches in pencil, watercolour and oils. Despite Sargent’s multiple attempts to capture Gautreau’s unusual aesthetic, he believed her to be an ‘unpaintable beauty’.⁶⁰ Lee’s narrative was published firstly as a standalone short story shortly after the event in 1886, and then included in *Hauntings, and Other Fantastic Tales* in 1890. Similarly, to ‘Winthrop’s Adventure’, this double publication echoed the doubling of the artist—John Singer Sargent/ Winthrop, and John Singer Sargent/ the artist narrator—plus the portrait doubles—Farinelli/ Rinaldini, and Alice Oke/ Alice Oke. Pulham suggests that Alice is a ‘sphinx’, and notes that this hybrid figure has parallels with the castrato through song.⁶¹ This brings us once again to Farinelli, the castrato, whom Lee described in her introduction to ‘Winthrop’s Adventure’ as ‘serpent, *sphinx*, wizard’.⁶²

Alice and William Oke

‘A Phantom Lover’ was published in 1886 by the Roberts Brothers of Boston. In a letter to her mother Matilda, Lee described it as one-hundred and twelve pages of ‘shilling dreadful’.⁶³ Sitting on the peripheries of both the supernatural and psychological genres, Lee uses physiognomy to propose a scientific explanation of the Okehursts’s actions. Whilst Athena Vrettos touches on the theory of inheritance in “‘In the clothes of dead people’: Vernon Lee and Ancestral Memory’ (2013), these ancestral traces as she sees them are passed through belongings. For Vrettos, ‘psychic traces of human memories

⁵⁹ Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object*, p. 128. It is posited by Pulham that ‘[t]he story is narrated by an unnamed artist, possibly based on John Singer Sargent.’ Pulham also suggests that the narrator of ‘Oke of Okehurst’ (pp. 128-132) may also be a self-portrait of Lee, further developing Denis Denisoff’s argument which focuses on same sex desire in the work between the Alice Okes, and the love triangle between the Alice Okes and Christopher Lovelock. Denis Denisoff, ‘The Forest beyond the Frame: Picturing Women’s Desires in Vernon Lee and Virginia Woolf’, in *Sexual Visibility from Literature to Film 1850-1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 98-120.

⁶⁰ Deborah Davis, *Strapless: John Singer Sargent and the Fall of Madame X* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004) p. 129.

⁶¹ Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object*, p. 131

⁶² Lee, *For Maurice*, p. xxxiii.

⁶³ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, July 15, 1886, Vernon Lee: Letters Home, #265. Colby College Archives.

could be found on material objects and personal possessions', in particular, those 'associated with violent or intense emotional experiences'.⁶⁴ In theorising 'psychometry'—a measure of spirit or soul—Vrettos is aligning ancestral memory with the supernatural power of extra-sensory perception, another stratigraphical example. In wearing the ancestral garments of the Okes of Okehurst, the wearers become embodiments of those individual's characteristics, most notably the connection across generational boundaries between the two Alice Okes. Vrettos's suggestion of an extra-sensory perception is essentially counter to my reading, and conversely maintains a form of layering, but both rely upon a psychological element, but with Vrettos the aligning of minds is due to ESP and not, as I argue, a biological form of ancestral inheritance.

William Oke's commissioning of a young artist to paint portraits of him and his wife Alice is a hereditary act: each generation of the Oke provides a record of their physiognomy to hang in Okehurst's stately hall alongside the portraits of their ancestors. Alice's choice of artist—the narrator of the tale—has recently fallen foul of a scandal at the academy (similarly to Sargent in 1884) yet she believes he will do her likeness justice. Arriving at Okehurst for his commission, the artist is pleasantly surprised, and then overwhelmed, at the beauty of his surroundings: Okehurst is a late-sixteenth century mansion, full of antiques (temporal fragments and trans-historic objects), and furnished with taste. William meets the artist, but Alice is asleep, and he waits until the evening meal is served to meet his subject. Once more, the artist is astonished: Alice is not a fusty mother and house-keeper, but a young, lithe, and aesthetically interesting woman. He states:

[T]his bamboo figure of hers had a suppleness and a stateliness, a play of outline with every step she took, that I can't compare to anything else; there was something of the peacock and something also of the stag; but above all, it was her own.⁶⁵

Alice is a pure 'outline': the artist attempts to read her from an abstract delineation, yet she is intransigent, stag and peacock-like, but inherently herself. The outline, whilst seemingly at odds with the stratified facial/trait binary thought of as physiognomic, is actually a key tool to understanding the lineaments of the face and its corresponding behaviours. The illustration below (Figure 2) from Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy Volume*

⁶⁴ Athena Vrettos, "'In the clothes of dead people': Vernon Lee and Ancestral Memory", *Victorian Studies* 55, 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 202-211 (p. 203).

⁶⁵ Vernon Lee, 'Oke of Okehurst or The Phantom Lover', in *Hauntings*, ed. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Toronto, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006), pp. 105-153 (p. 114).

I, posits examples of the outlines of faces possessing ‘exquisite judgement and superior talents’ and ‘extreme weakness of mind’.

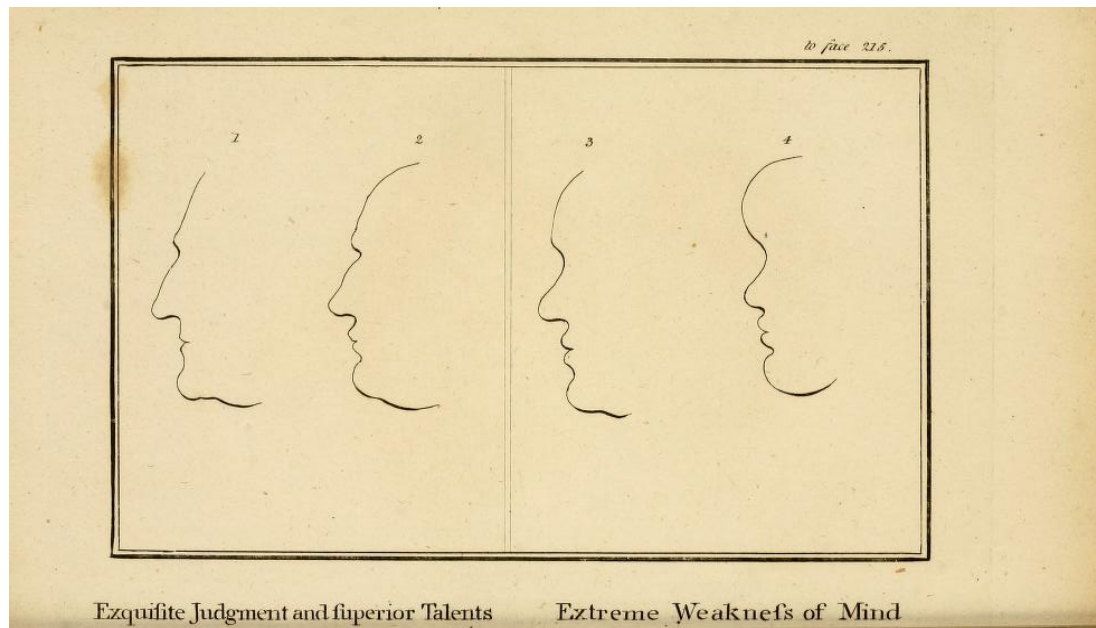


Figure 2, Lavater's illustration [n.p.].

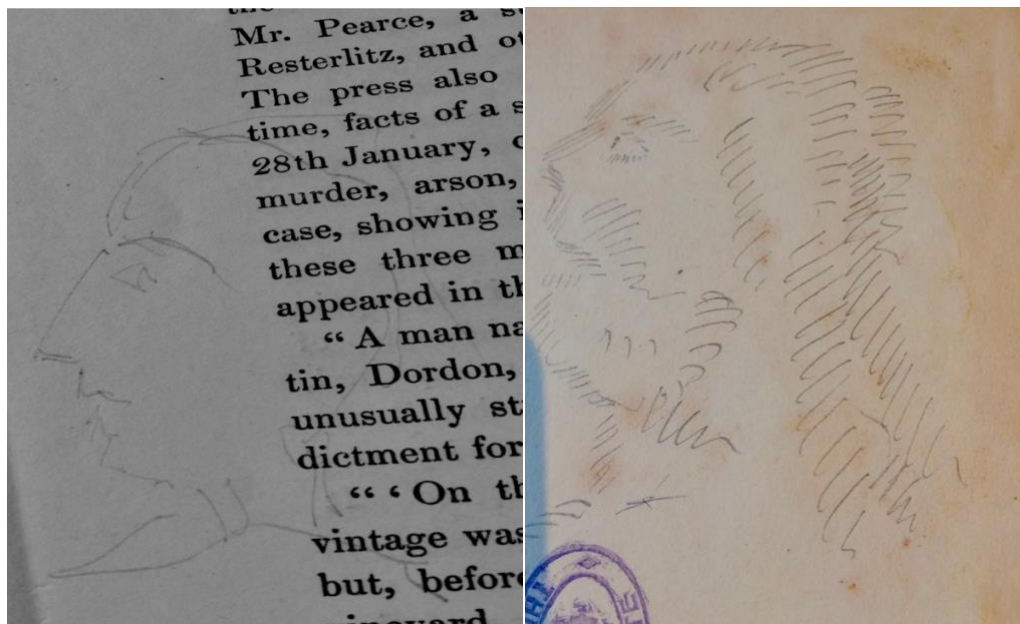


Figure 3 and 4, Lee's sketches from Marmaduke Sampson's *Criminal Jurisprudence* (1843).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Marmaduke Sampson, *Criminal Jurisprudence Considered in Relation to Cerebral Organization* (London: Samuel Highley, 1843). Harold Acton Archive, VL 345. 05 SAM.

Whilst the narrator's outline of Alice is in flux, in movement, we can infer a parallel between the description of Alice, and the illustrations and methods used in physiognomic study. Physiognomy is, according to Lavater 'the science of the knowledge of the features or **lineaments**, and of their different expression in the human countenance' [my emphasis].⁶⁷ By describing Alice as a series of lines and shapes, she loses her humanity, and any sense of being consistent and understandable, but this simultaneously provides the viewer with the opportunity of reading her lineaments to reveal her personality. At first glance, the contour of Alice provides the narrator/ artist with material enough to provide a reading. As Alice moves, he declares she is beyond comparison, and then immediately compares her first to bamboo, then a stag, and a peacock. This choice of animals appears a curious one, both the stag and peacock are male: both animals are showy and ornamented, the stag with its antlers, the peacock, with its incredible tail feather display. Alice is then perhaps a liminal—and lineal—being, dynamic in her animal likeness, supple and delicate like bamboo. Also, Alice is androgynous and with posturing masculine urges. Lavater suggests that a physiognomy bearing similarities to the stag indicates a creature 'in the vigour of *his* age'; his subject is also essentially a male.⁶⁸ The posturing of the male bird, Lavater suggests, is due to his 'richer and more elegant' clothing,⁶⁹ and denotes a passionate and haughty nature.⁷⁰ The accoutrements of the stag and the elegant dress of the peacock are the product of evolutionary sexual selection - and that the artist should consider Alice to display these qualities is perplexing. It is Alice's desire for the artist to reproduce her likeness; is she putting on a courtship display?

Mary Olmstead Stanton, a late nineteenth-century physiognomist, updated Lavater's *Fragmente* in her own voluminous set of handbooks to facial reading, *A System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy*. Of the peacock's characteristics, she states:

Their use is to attract the opposite sex by ruffling their brilliant plumage [...] "Look at me! Am I not a grand and gorgeous creature?" The effect of this extra and peculiar personal ornamentation is to *create vanity*, love, and desire for display and approbation in these feathered beaux, and tends to develop vanity by excess.⁷¹

Stanton writes of the stag:

Examine closely the stag, made for mountain climbing. Behold his length of limb, leanness, activity, and form, the brightness of his eye, his

⁶⁷ Lavater, *Volume I*, p. 12. My emphasis.

⁶⁸ Lavater, *Volume II*, p. 104.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷¹ Mary Olmstead Stanton, *A System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy, or How to Read Faces, Volume I* (Philadelphia and London: F. A. Davis, 1890), p. 383.

ambition, desire for scaling the greatest heights [...] He is here, and everywhere in a moment; does not dwell long at one place or pursuit.⁷²

Both animal characteristics suggest a pursuit; of love, and of reaching the ‘great heights’ afforded by ambition’s drives. The artist continues with Alice’s ‘[...] strange dimple in her thin, pale cheeks, and the strange whiteness in her full, wide-opened eyes: the moment when she had something of the stag in her movement’.⁷³ These examples of biological determinism—comparisons between animal and human characteristics—were common knowledge within the public sphere during this period. Not only did the scientific arts of physiognomy and phrenology have a significant following during the latter half of the nineteenth century, but works such as Lombroso and Nordau’s highlighted the somatic features of the criminal, and the unhealthy and the retrograde individuals tainting the human race.⁷⁴ Whilst Lee could not have been aware of Stanton’s (or Nordau’s) work during the period in which she was writing and editing ‘A Phantom Lover’ due to publishing dates, Stanton’s work illustrates clearly a potential tendency of Lavater’s *Essays*.⁷⁵ To the leitmotif of the stag, is added that of Alice’s ‘dimpled’ cheeks:

You see she isn’t really handsome; her forehead is too big, and her nose too short [...] Look at the strange cheeks, hollow and rather flat; well, when she smiled she had the most marvellous dimples here. There was something exquisite and uncanny about it.⁷⁶

Lavater claims that the face should be analysed using a three-part system, in which ‘the forehead to eyebrows’ is the ‘mirror of intelligence’, the ‘cheeks and the nose form the seat of moral life; and the mouth and chin aptly represent the animal life’.⁷⁷ That Alice has a large forehead suggests a profuse intellect. That her nose is short would connote a lack of morality. Combined, these features suggest a woman without scruples, one who connives to achieve her immoral desires. Not only are her cheeks dimpled, but sunken, hollow, suggesting a drawn-out thinness, also suggested by the straight lines of her ‘bamboo’ figure. Yet once more the artist contradicts this reading: emaciation becomes a marvellous smile, a warmth of gesture counter to the gaunt lines of her face. The three sets of features appear to contradict, yet read as one they seem to provide a portent to

⁷² Ibid., p. 101.

⁷³ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 114.

⁷⁴ Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, trans. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1895).

⁷⁵ Stanton’s *A System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy, or How to Read Faces* was published in 1890, ‘Oke of Okehurst’ or as it was initially titled ‘The Phantom Lover’, was published in 1886.

⁷⁶ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 106.

⁷⁷ Lavater, *Volume I*, p. 10.

Alice's true personality. Lavater, in Volume IV of *Fragmente*, comments on the multiple readings of dimpled cheeks:

I love dimples which smiling forms in the cheek. The physical traits have, in my opinion, a moral reference; but they are of different kinds. The more that the hollow approaches to a semi-circle, closing towards the mouth, the more it seems to announce self-love, and becomes disagreeable. On the contrary, the more it proceeds in a waving or serpentine form, the more graceful it is.⁷⁸

Through Lee's artist narrator Alice's physiognomic features are disclosed, but not read. The immoral intellect combined with self-love implies Alice is a narcissist, yet this physiognomic reading is not provided by the artist narrator, who merely sketches out the young woman's outline. Yet he is not so reticent to utilize a physiognomic reading in his descriptions of Alice's husband.

William Oke is described by Lee's artist narrator as 'a very tall, very well-made, very good-looking young man, with a beautiful fair complexion, beautiful fair moustache, and beautifully fitting clothes'.⁷⁹ His beauty is reiterated throughout the passage, whilst previously, the artist narrator measures Alice's aesthetic qualities by her 'handsomeness'.⁸⁰ William is presented as an exceptional specimen physically, and from the laws of physiognomy, we are supposed to presume a symmetry between character and facial attributes; indeed Lavater's chapter 'The State of Society Modifies and Entirely Forms the Complexion and Figure in the Human Species' reiterates this reading at the level of chapter titles. It is the individual of 'better fortune', with 'liberal means of subsistence' who has a delicately tinted complexion, fair hair, and 'the most agreeable assemblage of human perfection'.⁸¹ William Oke's beautiful, fair, 'wholesome pink and white and blond conventionality' and Alice's hair—'cropped in short pale curls'—suggests purity and unconventionality.⁸² William's fair complexion all too easily belies any discomfort he feels in company, particularly should his wife choose to discuss the affairs of their seventeenth-century ancestors, Nicholas and Alice Oke:

The poor man blushed perfectly crimson during this explanation, as if he had come with the most improper proposal; and I noticed—the only interesting thing about him—a very odd nervous frown between his

⁷⁸ Johann Casper Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy; Calculated to Extend the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind, Volume IV*, trans. Rev. C Moore (London: H. D. Symonds, 1797), p. 22.

⁷⁹ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 107.

⁸⁰ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, July 15, 1886, Vernon Lee: Letters Home, #265. Colby College Archives.

⁸¹ Lavater, *Volume I*, p. 123.

⁸² Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 114.

eyebrows, a perfect double gash—a thing which usually means something abnormal: a mad-doctor of my acquaintance calls it the maniac-frown.⁸³

William's conventionality and plain good looks are boring to the artist, yet, on observing William closely for the painting, he notices a redeeming feature, a leitmotif: the 'perfect double gash' between his brows. As the artist narrates, he is sure that this 'deep gash' is significant, a latent characteristic, hiding beneath a façade of beauty.

He spent hours every day in his study [...] emerging for lunch with piles of letters in his hand, and that odd puzzled look in his good healthy face, that deep gash between his eyebrows, which my friend the mad-doctor calls the maniac-frown.⁸⁴

The off-handedness with which the narrator declares the comments of the 'mad-doctor' suggest the artist to be sceptical in his approach to the forehead furrow. But the structure of the narrative is one of retelling of events, a cyclical return to the start of his encounter with the Okes. Therefore, the artist's reliability as a narrator, and as a reader of physiognomy, is questionable. Indeed, this short extract suggests a disharmony between William Oke's physiognomy—his beauty—and a medicalisation of his lurking potential for mania and moral insanity. William's face is transformed by underlying tensions with Alice, and the artist narrator becomes, in this instance, a reader not of physiognomy, but pathognomy (the study of passions or emotions) or psychology. We are told by the narrator that the gash is the signifier of a maniac personality, and this reading—despite its less than scientific sounding source—as a sign of irascibility'.⁸⁵

William's irascibility is brought out by the actions of his young wife Alice, who is also his cousin. They are both descended from Nicholas and Alice Oke, who, in 1626, murdered the poet Christopher Lovelace, a lover of Alice's. What fascinates both the present-day Alice and the artist, is her likeness to her ancestor Alice: '[t]he lady was wonderfully like the present Mrs. Oke [...] the same dimples in thin cheeks, the same wide-opened eyes, the same vague eccentricity of expression [...]'.⁸⁶ In commissioning an artist to record their likenesses, William and Alice are continuing a family tradition, conforming to the aristocratic norm of displaying lineage and heredity pictorially. As mentioned earlier, Lavater in the *Fragmente* discusses the importance of the family portrait, where resemblances between family members are displayed to show the purity

⁸³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

⁸⁵ Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo on Art and the Artist*, trans. Ellen Callman and Andre Chastel (Courier Dover Publications, 2002), pp. 144-145.

⁸⁶ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 118.

of the blood-line.⁸⁷ In his essay 'Fate', Ralph Waldo Emerson similarly considers physiognomy and ancestral inheritance:

We sometimes see a change of expression in our companion and say his father or his mother comes to the windows of his eyes, and sometimes a remote relative. In different hours, a man represents each of several of his ancestors, as if there were seven or eight of us rolled up in each man's skin—seven or eight ancestors at least; and they constitute the variety of notes for that new piece of music which his life is. At the corner of the street you read the possibility of each passenger in a facial angle, in the complexion, in the depth of his eye. His parentage determines it. Men are what their mothers made them.⁸⁸

Lee was a keen reader of Emerson, and wrote on his influence as a 'Teacher of Latter-Day Tendencies' in her 1909 collection of essays *Gospels of Anarchy*. Emerson was also on Lee's mind in 1886—the year of 'A Phantom Lover's' publication, when she quotes from his work 'Spiritual Laws' in *Baldwin* (1886). Emerson here suggests that not only does a physiognomical resemblance show itself in subsequent generations, but, similarly to present-day Alice Oke, the likenesses can be drawn from further back historically. The closeness of appearance is aided by Alice's attempts to dress and be like her ancestor, a fact the artist narrator confirms, he states:

To resemble the Alice Oke of the year 1626 was the caprice, the mania, the pose, the whatever you may call it, of the Alice Oke of 1880; and to perceive this resemblance was the sure way of gaining her good graces. It was the most extraordinary craze, of all the extraordinary crazes of childless and idle women, that I had ever met; but it was more than that, it was admirably characteristic.⁸⁹

That Alice should show the physiognomical signs of inheritance is her desire, a caprice, a mania. The quotation above implicitly suggests that the recognition of this fact was sure to gain access to her good graces. Paradoxically, this mania, this passion to resemble 1626's Alice, is what makes 1880's Alice stand out; the artist finds this 'admirably characteristic'. In attempting to replicate the physical and psychological characteristics of her ancestor she renders herself singular in the eyes of the artist narrator, it is this shared character that he finds so paradoxically 'characteristic'. The mania is suggested as being a self-fascination and a morbidity on behalf of Alice by the artist narrator, he writes:

Now that I look back upon it, I am tempted to think that the psychological peculiarity of that woman might be summed up in an exorbitant and absorbing interest in herself—a Narcissus attitude—

⁸⁷ Tytler, p. 201.

⁸⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Fate' (1860) in *The Portable Emerson* ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 503-526 (p. 507).

⁸⁹ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 122.

curiously complicated with a fantastic imagination, a sort of morbid day-dreaming, all turned inwards, with no outer characteristic save a certain restlessness, a perverse desire to surprize and shock [...].⁹⁰

In this analogy, later to be used by both Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud to describe a self-love and autoeroticism,⁹¹ the artist presents Alice as doomed, through love of one's own image, one's own image that belonged to an ancestor. In the ways in which the artist describes Alice's singularity, the reader is conscious of that singularity belonging to another, earlier self, (i.e. through traits inherited). That the artist also describes Alice as 'morbid' suggests that to an outsider (other than the artist, or perhaps to the artist as well, who appears to find this type of degeneracy fascinating, given he calls her a 'delicate, morbid, exotic hot-house creature'⁹²) that this atavism of the family line, reverting back to the form and character of a woman two-hundred and fifty-four-years prior, is a degenerative, and not a positive, evolutionary development. John Stokes's study of fin de siècle culture *In the Nineties* suggests that 'in the nineties, that single word 'morbid'—incorporating anything from the sluggish to the downright deathly—carried a burden of meaning greater than any other derogatory adjective'.⁹³ Whilst Stokes also considers the term to be a 'provocative euphemism for homosexuality', the attraction of Alice to Alice appears to be a Narcissistic self-adoration, or a fascination for the romance and passion of the seventeenth century Alice. Stokes continues:

At a time when all the official moralities, endorsed either by science or religion, trumpeted the positive virtues of vitality, progress and activity, to be 'morbid' was to be exceptional. 'Morbidity' was the enemy within, and internal threat to the organism whether it was society as a whole or the media through which society found expression [...].⁹⁴

Furthermore, 'morbidity' linked the artistic minority with those other social outsiders whose eccentric activities corrupted the whole—the lunatics, criminals and sexual deviants of scientific treatise.⁹⁵ Yet it is not only the Oke women who display an air of 'morbidity'. William Oke questions his own state of mind—'perhaps I am morbid'—that

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

⁹¹ See Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, Volume XIV (1914-1916), trans James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), pp. 67- 102; and Havelock Ellis, 'Autoeroticism', in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Volume I, (New York, NY: Random House, 1905), p. 282.

⁹² Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 133.

⁹³ John Stokes, *In the Nineties* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 25.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

suggests degenerative atavism is carried by the male members of the Oke family too; William and Alice being cousins, both descended from Nicholas and Alice Oke.⁹⁶

As Alice descends further into her obsessive state, William struggles to control himself in front of the artist. At Alice's behest, he invites his family to stay at Okehurst, where, after the evening meal, the guests wish to dress up, and remind William about the press of clothes kept at Okehurst. Initially reticent, William soon engages with the spirit of the partiers, and finds a costume in which to deck himself. The artist, observing the festivities, writes of William:

I had really never seen so magnificent a specimen of the handsome Englishman; he looked, despite all modern associations of his costume, more genuinely old-world than all the rest [...] with his admirably regular features and beautiful fair hair and complexion.⁹⁷

William is relaxed, his face handsome, his features regular, and his complexion clear and fair. He is the epitome of good breeding, health and good character, and the artist admires his 'old-world' air; a clear allusion to the aristocratic ancestral line of the Okes at Okehurst. Unfortunately, the rare moment in which William appears at ease—no maniac frown—is not to last, as all attention is drawn towards '[...] a boy, slight and tall, in a brown riding-coat, leathern belt and big buff boots, a little grey cloak over one shoulder, a large gray hat slouched over the eyes, a dagger and pistol at the waist'. Dressed up like a seventeenth-century valet was 'Mrs. Oke, her eyes preternaturally bright, and her whole face lit up with a bold, perverse smile'.⁹⁸ William, who often appears fearful at the mention of his ancestor's misdemeanours freezes at the site of Alice. The artist continues:

That weird creature, visibly not of this earth, a reincarnation of a woman who murdered her lover two centuries and a half ago [...] It explained that strange smile which was not for any of us, and yet was not merely for herself—that strange, far-off look in the wide pale eyes.⁹⁹

Alice is supernatural, not of this time and place, but not *not* of it: a relic of a previous age, trans-historic. For William Oke, this reminder of the terrible actions of their ancestors is too much, and he slowly succumbs to the mania suggested by his brow-line.

The artist narrator, on an evening walk with William, attempts, at first subtly, an intervention. He suggests that William leave Okehurst with him, to see a good doctor (is this the mad-doctor?):

⁹⁶ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 133.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

And taking his arm, I tried to explain to him my view of the situation—that his wife was merely eccentric, and a little theatrical and imaginative, and that she took a pleasure in teasing him. That he, on the other hand, was letting himself get into a morbid state; that he was ill, and ought to see a good doctor, I even offered to take him to town with me. I poured out volumes of psychological explanations. I dissected Mrs. Oke's character twenty times over [...].¹⁰⁰

There is a reversal of psychological fortunes here, Narcissistic Alice, with her 'morbid' delusions, is no longer self-loving and corrupt, but merely 'theatrical' and 'eccentric'. Where the artist had previously been vague, and unable to fully articulate the often-conflicting characteristics of Alice, he now is able to 'dissect' her character 'twenty times over'; he is now a scholar of psychology, and feels he is able to diagnose both Okes. This shift from the earlier physiognomic descriptions of the Okes to a psychological reading suggests the process by which physiognomic study is supplanted by the study of the mind. There is once again a sense of disharmony between the external features and the psychology, which moves away from Lavaterian ideas of sympathy between face and thoughts. The narrative thus becomes, in part, a representation of the intellectual movement between physiognomy and psychology.

William Oke's disinclination to leave Okehurst with the artist to visit a doctor is suggestive of a paranoid mania: he believes that his absence would allow Alice to fraternize with an unknown admirer, who he believes he sees within the grounds. The narrative reaches its crescendo when William returns from a visit to town—after stating to the artist he couldn't leave—earlier than expected. William finds the artist at Okehurst and quietly suggests he follow with the artist noting '[t]here was something in his face that made me start up and follow him at once. He was extremely quiet, even stiff, not a muscle of his face moving, but very pale'.¹⁰¹ William's inner turmoil is expressed by his facial features: yet it is transient. William dashes into the yellow drawing room, and the artist follows, after a scrabble and a loud noise, the artist looks over to the chair:

[...] with her bold head resting on its seat, lay Mrs. Oke, a pool of red forming in her white dress. Her mouth was convulsed, as if in that automatic shriek, but her wide-open white eyes seemed to smile vaguely and distantly.¹⁰²

In death, Alice's face becomes fixed; and whilst her lips suggest terror, her eyes remain pleasantly fixated. The artist narrator reads—and relates—Alice's end as being

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 152.

what she would have wanted: still notwithstanding death, Alice is still unfixable. She is both vague and distant, terms Lavater finds unconscionable.¹⁰³ William had shot his young wife, and immediately after doing so, dashed out of the room, chasing Alice's invisible lover. Both William and the artist are chasing the unattainable: William, his wife's supernatural lover, the artist, Alice as the complete woman. In the evening, Oke realizes his actions have cost Alice her life, and he attempts to shoot himself. Yet he 'merely fractured his jaw, and died a few days later, raving.' That William's attempt on his life should disfigure his face, breaking the jaw, seems apt. Paradoxically, the features that revealed William's madness—the manic frown—remains untouched, and the beautiful face and handsomeness, that revealed good breeding and steadiness are now obliterated by a shot from his own gun: psychological stigmata, upon his face alongside the physiognomic.

In finalising his narration of the Okes of Okehurst, the artist explains that '[t]here were all sorts of legal inquiries, through which I went as through a dream; and whence it resulted that Mr. Oke had killed his wife in a fit of momentary madness'.¹⁰⁴ Fears of losing Alice to a lover and the shame of his ancestor's misdeeds pushed William Oke to accidentally kill his wife. The artist noted the 'maniac-frown' of William, and it appears that his psychological reading was correct. The contradiction between his fair and handsome face, which contorts into the crimson flushed cheeks and furrowed brow is most concerning.

Lee's narrative is, like 'Winthrop's Adventure' a narrative of doubles and repetition. True to Tzvetan Todorov's definition of *the fantastic* there is a hesitation between the supernatural and the natural: the possession of Alice Oke by her ancestor spectrally, or psychologically.¹⁰⁵ Yet we mustn't forget as readers that this narrative is framed by the young artist, commissioned by Alice Oke to paint a pair of portraits. To return once again to the quote from *Hortus Vitae*, the portrait is an attempt by the artist to communicate both the likeness and the personality of their sitter. There exists a tension for the artist between reproducing the physiognomic and exploring the psychological characteristics of their subject. As readers, we have utilized the artist's (often vague and uncertain) descriptions of his hosts as psychological insights as hinted at by their physiognomy. But we have to recognize that with 'Oke of Okehurst' Lee is exploring a

¹⁰³ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy: Designed to Promote the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, p. lxxxiii.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 33.

schism between the disciplines and, furthermore, that this dissidence between physiognomy and psychology is mediated by the artist. As readers, we have perhaps concluded that the character traits and features shared between both Alice Okes imply a similar path. But this reading is shaped by the narration of our unreliable artist narrator. One who confesses ‘I had her [Alice] on the brain. I pursued her, her physical image, her psychological explanation, with a kind of passion which filled my days, and prevented my ever feeling dull.’¹⁰⁶ In presenting the obsessive narcissism of Alice Oke and the slow derangement of William Oke at the hands of his young wife, the artist narrator presents himself as a bastion of sanity. Yet that the artist narrator would stand aside and allow the married couple to combust with jealousy and madness is itself bizarre. Despite the narrator’s claims to be a mere interlocutor, a translator of the narrative, Felman would have us realize that his memories are subject to a mode of ‘reflexivity’ that is dialogic, that shifts and undercuts the ‘clear-cut polarities between self and object, self and other [...] analyst and analysand’.¹⁰⁷ The slow degeneracy of the Oke’s family line is illustrated with examples from art, physiognomy, and psychology. Yet there is one subject who evades physiognomic analysis. Alice’s choice of artist was due to his work shown at the Academy; neither William nor Alice comment on his facial features. Felman’s model applied to the artist’s relationship with the Okes suggests a projection of his own physiognomic traits onto the young couple. Perhaps the murder and suicide could have been prevented, should the Okes have taken a reading of the artist rather than his canvasses. As Lavater notes ‘[w]hat master or mistress of a family will choose a servant without considering the exterior?’¹⁰⁸ The artist narrator represents Felman’s analyst; he is the reader, and re-teller, of these signals of impending madness. He is a character about whom we know little. We are not provided with the opportunity to ‘read’ his facial features, his physiognomy: we must rely on the way in which his ‘unconscious’ reveals itself through the narrative. In this case then, do these readings of madness reveal more about the machinations and twisted behaviours of the artist rather than the Okes who were perhaps driven to insanity by their employee?

In engaging with the movement from physiognomy, to pathognomy, and to psychology, Lee keeps abreast of the developing sciences concerned with mind, personality and behaviour. As each branch of science is refuted by that which follows, Lee traces this action, interweaving these theories and their successors into her narrative

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *Hauntings*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁷ Felman, p. 61.

¹⁰⁸ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy: Designed to Promote the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, p. 17.

and non-fiction works. Like Hering's theory of memory (which Lee adapts into the 'blotting-book' metaphor in *The Spirit of Rome*) Lee's reading of characters relies upon different acquired modes of reading: from a 'simple' physiognomic reading in 'Winthrop's Adventure', to an amalgam of physiognomy and psychology in 'Oke of Okehurst', Samuel Butler's theory of heritability (built on the foundations of Ewald Hering, and an inspiration to Semon's own work on memory) would suggest that the Oke's tragedy—the murder and suicide—existed and was enabled by acquired memories. Butler suggests:

If a desperate man blows his brains out—an action he can do once in a lifetime only, and which none of his ancestors can have done *before leaving offspring*—still nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the movements necessary to achieve his end consist of habitual movements—movements, that is to say, which were once difficult, but which have been practised and practised by the memory until they are now performed automatically.¹⁰⁹

William and Alice Oke's suggestibility, and the subsequent death of both, posits a fatalistic mnemonic conditioning as the cause, engaged by those fascinated by the Oke mythos, including the artist narrator. Whereas 'Winthrop's Adventure' suggests a simple chain of association in its reading of physiognomy, replicating the 'scholar's copy book', 'Oke of Okehurst' suggests a dialogic mode of reading, alongside an associative and non-linear recall of memories, that maps onto the framework of the blotting-book mind. Finally, in 'Lavater's House' Lee reveals she is cognizant of the traces of physiognomy and pathognomy that remain in contemporary works of neurological science, Freudian psychoanalysis, and physiological psychology. In doing so, she amalgamates the linear model of the superseding nature of scientific progressions, and synchronous models of influence simultaneously in one essay. It becomes both the scholar's copy and blotting-book.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Butler, *Unconscious Memory* (London: A. C. Field, 1910), p. 163.

Chapter V

Malthusianism to Meliorism:

Vernon Lee, Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter

[...] on all sides, the more society develops, there is a constantly increasing intricacy of moral connection between the present, the past and the future.¹

-Vernon Lee, *Baldwin* (1886)

As we have seen from the *Baldwin* essay 'On Honour and Evolution', Lee's engagement with biological and evolutionary science often intersects with morality and ethics. Whilst Ernest Crawley (and many other anthropologists) insisted that morality was God-given, for Lee, it was a necessary and difficult choice in the development of human civilization. For Charles Darwin in *The Descent of Man* (1871) it is moral sense and conscience that differentiates mankind from the lower animals.² Darwin suggests that moral sense is developed via a social instinct that 'takes pleasure' from 'the society of its fellows' and engenders feelings of sympathy.³ This then, when combined with memory, provides feelings of 'dissatisfaction' from unsatisfied instincts due to societal pressures. This dissatisfaction is then expressed to the social group, and may result in the dissatisfied 'guiding the conduct of each member'.⁴ That morals exist for the welfare of the self and others suggests for Darwin, that good moral tendencies, as well as bad, can be transmitted through generations.⁵ Darwin recognizes that

With savages, the weak in the body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilized-men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment [...] No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man.⁶

¹ Vernon Lee, *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), p. 68.

² Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Volume I (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 70.

³ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

⁶ Ibid., p. 168

It is this form of social morality that is problematic in the development of the human race. Darwin argues that had mankind not have previously been subject to the natural selection in the ‘savage’ stages of our development, we would not have reached ‘manhood’.⁷ So in effect, the morals we have developed as a race, are counter-to, and yet simultaneously promote, the evolution of the species. It is this complex entanglement of morality and inheritance I wish to consider in this chapter, alongside Lee’s personal relationship with A. Mary F. Robinson and Mary’s fiancé, James Darmesteter.

The British Institute holds Lee’s personal copies of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1901 edition) and *The Descent of Man* (again, 1901 edition). Both works are late editions (*Origin* was published in 1859, and *Descent* in 1871) but Lee makes explicit references to Darwinian theory much earlier in her writing career in both *Belcaro* and *Baldwin*.⁸ Lee also read Karl Pearson’s interpretation of natural selection in *The Grammar of Science* (1892), and in George Romanes’s *Darwin, and After Darwin* (1890). Lee’s reading in evolutionary science is presented by Towheed as an application of evolutionary theory as one of interest in superseding theorems, with the period of interest generally being post-1900.⁹ I want to position my work both in agreement with Towheed and also as a counter to it. Lee’s approach to heredity and inheritability *is* interested in overlay (as Towheed suggests), but also blends together distinct and disparate concepts. In doing so, Lee produces an underlying hypothesis that is itself an organically developed synthesis of her extensive study on the discipline; a blotting-book approach. This is never more evident than in her approach to morality and eugenics. I also want to consider works published prior to Lee’s split with Mary. Therefore I am here using Lee’s earlier reading in evolution and heredity as a framework from which to understand her vehement opposition to Mary’s choice of husband, due to his apparent disability. This suggests Lee’s awareness of and interest in Lamarckian and Neo-Lamarckian thought, a stance Lee publically refutes in the introduction to *Mnemic Psychology* much later in 1923 (Chapter I).

Whilst Lee does not directly link herself to the eugenics movement, she read the work of founder Francis Galton, who devised the discipline in 1883. As Towheed notes, Lee was also a supporter of August Weismann, whose works also provided a theoretical

⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸ Vernon Lee, *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: W. Satchell and Co., 1880), p. 42. And; *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), p. 29.

⁹ Shafquat Towheed, ‘The Creative Evolution of Scientific Paradigms: Vernon Lee and the Debate over the Hereditary Transmission of Acquired Characters’, *Victorian Studies*, 46.1, (Autumn 2006), pp. 33-61.

foundation for the movement. Also influential was the work of Malthus, whose *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) discussed curbing population growth by the prevention of unsuitable individuals reproducing through a ‘preventative check’.¹⁰ In reading the letters sent by Lee to her mother, during the onset of Mary’s engagement to Darmesteter, the question of whether Lee sits *morally* regarding this field. How did she engage with these ideas? The following two chapters consider Lee’s interest in biological and psychological inheritance, most notably the partial return of hereditary characteristics. Here, Lee’s library represents the stratified development of the field of heredity and evolutionary ethics, structurally echoing the series of distinct ideas extant within the scholar’s copy book. Yet I will argue that Lee refuses to remain within these boundaries, and show how the manipulation and hybridization of these theories shaped the personal relationships of those closest to her.

In focusing on Lee’s reading in evolutionary science and ethics as a framework for understanding her response to the burgeoning relationship I will suggest that discourses concerning the inheritance of characteristics—both acquired and innate—are in evidence. Additionally, Lee also shows an awareness of, and staunch opinions on, the debate surrounding the prevention of pregnancy, in particular, the use of the ‘French Method’ as a family preventative.

On August 25, 1887, Vernon Lee wrote to her mother, Matilda Paget, from Charleton, the home of Clementina Anstruther-Thomson in Scotland. The letter tells of a change in Lee’s travel plans, due to an occurrence which has given the writer an acute shock. Lee is unable to tell her mother about the events which prompt a change to her schedule, an unusual act of secrecy for a correspondent ordinarily so open. Furthermore, this trauma has caused Lee to slip into a deep depression, which she feels to be a drain on Miss Anstruther-Thomson’s (or Kit, as she was affectionately known) hospitality. Lee pleads with Matilda to write to Kit and invite her to the Villa il Palmerino, the Paget’s family home in Florence, so that the Pagets may reciprocate her kindness.

Five days later, on August 30, Lee is finally able to enlighten her family to the source of her emotional distress:

I can now explain the whole mystery, which I fear may have made you anxious. Last week I received half a sheet of notepaper from Mary telling me she has engaged herself to marry James Darmesteter, a Jewish Prof.

¹⁰ T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population: or, a View of its Past and Present Effects on Human Happiness: with an Inquiry into Our Prospects Respecting the Future Removal or Mitigation of the Evils Which It Occasions*, ed. Donald Winch and Patricia James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 21.

at the College de France, whom I have seen once (he brought a letter three or four days before I left town) and she had then seen thrice, including the occasion upon which she asked him (for she says she asked him rather than he her) to marry.¹¹

The engagement of Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter was by any standards a rushed and unusual affair. Mary had met Darmesteter at the British Museum reading rooms, and after just three meetings, had asked him to become her fiancé. Mary was Lee's closest friend and this attachment of Mary to a man, about whom she knew little, felt to Lee like an intense betrayal. Many Lee scholars, such as Martha Vicinus, and Vineta Colby, believe Mary and Lee were same-sex partners, albeit, none consummated. Vicinus argues that Lee's relationships 'advocated a feminine purity that arose from a disciplined desire, rather from either a denial or ignorance of passion'.¹² Colby wrote, including a quote from Lee's own *Euphorion* that '[h]er feelings for Mary Robinson were to remain "a kind of love which is mainly aesthetic"', and that 'their relationship was and remained nonsexual in the physical sense'.¹³ Pulham's *Art and the Transitional Object* draws attention to the problematic labelling of a sexuality for Lee, and instead centres these discussions on the art object, rather than the person.¹⁴ It is clear from correspondence that both Mary and Lee had strong affection for one another, but there is no real evidence one way or the other of a sexual relationship. It stung Lee's pride that she was not consulted, or even in London, at the time of Mary's momentous and life-changing decision. In a relationship, ordinarily so physically close and intellectually open, the half-sheet of notepaper seemed to Lee both inappropriate and inadequate. The note was rushed, hasty, and with the bare-minimum information. It is little wonder that this slip of news gave Lee 'rather a shock'.¹⁵

¹¹ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 30, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, # 320. Colby College Archives.

¹² Martha Vicinus, "Passion... Immense and Unrestrained" Destructive Desires', in *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006) pp. 143-170, (p. 144).

¹³ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, MA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 59, 58.

¹⁴ Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), p. xiv.

¹⁵ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 25, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #318. Colby College Archives.



Figure 1, Self-portrait of Mary Robinson (1902).



Figure 2, Photograph of James Darmesteter.

It is possible to speculate on the cause for Mary's proposition to Darmesteter; and Lee leaving London to spend time with Kit Anstruther Thomson was perhaps a contributing factor. Perhaps Mary sensed that Lee had been attracted to Kit, and felt it necessary to

tie herself to the thirty-eight-year-old French professor. But for Lee, the Pagets in Florence, and Mary's family in London, it was not the haste with which Mary decided to bond herself to a man whom she barely knew that shocked, it was his unusual appearance. Lee's letter to Matilda continues:

Mr. Darmesteter is youngish, he has a very sympathetic face indeed and is rather a distinguished sort of professional nonentity.

The letter here begins with a response to Darmesteter himself, who seems a rather average man, he is neither old, nor young, just 'youngish'. Lee seems to find him hard to fix. But when Lee focuses her attention on his physical attributes, she quickly creates multiple layers of description. The syntax is packed with nouns and labels:

But, he is a dwarf, a humpback, a cripple from birth in so grievous and terrible a way, that one can scarcely look at this quivering, suffering mass of distortion when he is quiet, still less when he drags himself across the room. He looks as if all his stunted and misshapen little body (he is the size of a boy of ten) would fall to pieces, and his hand, even on a boiling day, was cold like a snake.¹⁶

In explaining to her mother why Mary has surely made a terrible error, Lee describes Darmesteter in the most terrifying terms. She seems unable to focus her gaze on him, he is a 'quivering, suffering mass of distortion', a jumble of anatomy, an unnatural entity. Darmesteter fascinates and horrifies Lee in equal measure. Her language pulls no punches: she describes his disabilities in intransitive verbs, he seems to be a shape shifter, morphing from 'dwarf' to 'humpback' to 'cripple'. The way Darmesteter 'drags' himself, and the cold and snakelike hand suggest a tempting, slithering seducer fresh out of Eden, the embodiment of temptation, an echo of the serpent in *Genesis*.

Lee also evokes Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*:

I have just had a heart broken letter from Mrs. R. Mary's death would, I think, have hurt her less: she feels hopeless, dazed, as if her daughter were mad or bewitched. Really, two centuries ago this Quasimodo would have been burnt for less.¹⁷

Both Lee and Mary's mother feel Mary has been enchanted by Darmesteter, and Lee suggests Mrs Robinson would rather see her child buried than bewitched. Mary is enraptured, under his spell and 'ready to die for him': the unnatural affection aroused in Mary will spread like a miasma. Lee acknowledges it is only a matter of time before

¹⁶ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 30, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, # 320. Colby College Archives.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Darmesteter ‘get[s] the better of everyone’s feelings’, those who are presently filled with ‘horror’ at the idea of the Darmesteter—Robinson marriage would soon be mesmerized by the Professor.

Despite her outpouring of disgust brought about by a deep sense of betrayal, Lee eventually attempts to rationalize the relationship: she senses something perhaps noble and intelligent behind Darmesteter’s physical appearance. He has both a ‘sympathetic face’ and ‘looks good’, he is ‘noble, [with] a poor Leopardi face, not unbeautiful’. Lee’s attempts to describe Darmesteter for her mother vacillate between the outer shell of the man—subject to Lee’s phrenological and physiological analysis; and the admiration for the inner man—the intellectual, the sympathetic, and the noble.

On thinking over the matter (I confess feeling about it somewhat different) I admit that Mary might be perfectly right in what she has done madly (and cruelly to all of us) as she has done it.¹⁸

Overwhelmingly, Lee feels that her own opinion must be based on what she considers to be the righteousness of Mary’s decision. She admits that ‘Mary might be perfectly right’ despite making decisions ‘madly’ and suffering under the bewitchment of the humpbacked cripple. The ‘as she has done it’ is riddled with ambiguity: on the one hand, it suggests a finality to Mary’s decision. The proposal has been made, she must go through with the deed. But it also suggests a trust between Lee and Mary, it has been Mary’s choice to offer her hand to Darmesteter, and it may be the correct thing to do, Lee notes ‘as she has done it’. Lee’s trust in Mary’s choice is emotionally difficult – it is cruel – but she perceives it to be just and fitting: Mary’s love for Darmesteter is one ‘born of pity’ and his is ‘born of gratitude’. The spectre of sexuality is quashed: it is a relationship based on compassion, sympathy, and intellectual appreciation. Lee describes Mary herself to Matilda as a ‘character so delicate, strange, almost abnormal’ who is ‘physically and morally unlike the normal woman’. This suggests a physical and psychological affinity between Darmesteter and Mary with which Lee is able to rationalize the engagement; yet that Mary ‘pities’ Darmesteter, suggests Mary is—in Lee’s eyes at least—attaching herself in a charitable way. Mary’s moral superiority is her strength and places her above the ‘normal woman’. Her physicality, on the other hand, is insubstantial and fragile:

Roughly speaking, the thing will be alright if this extraordinary marriage remains really an extraordinary and anomalous one; but if is going to be anything, beyond a marriage of true minds even if she be saved from risking her life (for she isn’t fit to have children) to produce cripples and

¹⁸ Ibid.

abortions fit for Pareto's strychnine, the matter becomes, to my mind, unnatural and sickening.¹⁹

Mary's womanhood continues to be scrutinized and to be opened-up to scrutiny by Lee: she is not to have children with Darmesteter, and any offspring produced by their union would be little better than a scientific sample or curiosity. The casual aside '(for she isn't fit to have children)' immediately follows the risk to her life, which suggests Mary would find physically carrying a child difficult. Therefore, with Mary's inability, and Darmesteter's physicality, what would be the most natural occurrence for a newly married couple of child bearing age is presented as unnatural and sickening. Lee is adamant that even should feelings develop between Mary and Darmesteter—beyond pity and appreciation—the marriage should still, nevertheless, remain unconsummated. The marriage of true minds is something Lee returns to throughout her career, perhaps as a way of reconciling these ugly feelings about Mary and Darmesteter's relationship. In *Gospels of Anarchy and Other Contemporary Studies* (1909) Lee laments the lack of 'the marriage of true minds' which 'dooms so much of the world's best talent to sterility'.²⁰ In this respect, the marriage between Mary and Darmesteter would be vitally fertile—intellectually—despite the sterility of their sexual relationship. It is telling that this statement was published over twenty years after Lee's initial shock at the marriage. There is equally strong sentiment in the essay 'Sere and Yellow' from *Hortus Vitae* (1904), in which Lee muses on 'loves and friendships' that 'have ceased to be more than a handful of faded paper'.²¹ As the essay continues Lee considers parenthood and marriage, the 'long-deferred' parenthood and the 'corresponding class of marriages of true minds. Genuine ones are exceedingly rare during youth [...]'.²² Lee suggests that these marriages are rare, but exist: perhaps her experience with Mary's proposal to Darmesteter at the age of thirty-one was the example.

It is on the half-sheet letter informing Lee of her decision, written between August 20-24, that Mary expresses a wish that their 'relations to continue as before' and that Darmesteter was 'quite willing to consider [Lee] in the light of a sister'. Although this letter is missing, Lee explains the subject and content of Mary Robinson's half-sheet

¹⁹ Ibid. Vilfredo Pareto was a lecturer on economics at the University of Florence, and was friendly with Lee's brother Eugene. Whilst Lee didn't read Pareto until the 1903 – *Les Systemes Socialistes Volume I* – she obviously had an understanding of his work and interest in social evolution from Eugene.

²⁰ Vernon Lee, *Gospels of Anarchy and Other Contemporary Studies* (London and New York, NY: T. Fisher Unwin and Brentano's, 1909), p. 88.

²¹ Vernon Lee, *Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Gardening of Life* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1904), p. 152.

²² Ibid, pp. 156-157.

letter in the letter dated August 30, 1887. Whilst it is fair to trust Lee's description of the missing letter's contents, we must also recognize that this correspondence will have been destroyed by either Lee's hand, or at the insistence of Lee by Irene Cooper Willis. Lee suggests in the letter to Matilda that her place is assured alongside Darmesteter in Mary's affections, and that she and Darmesteter can maintain an intellectual relationship with Mary as symbolic siblings. Yet, despite this offer of kinship—Lee and Darmesteter as brother and sister—Lee refuses. The positional shift from lover, friend and intellectual partner, to the fiancé's sister was too much of a demotion.

In her final paragraph of the letter, Lee moves on from Mary, thematically, and perhaps emotionally. She begins to introduce Kit's charms once more to her mother: and Matilda surely must have noted the contrasting qualities of Lee's love-interests. Kit is:

[...] one of the most wonderfully good, and gentle, and strong, and simple of all created beings, [...] with the face of Annie Meyer on the body of Mme. Cantagalli, who talks slang like a schoolboy and cares in reality for nothing but pictures, and trees and grass, and Browning and Shelley, and what is right and wrong and why.²³

She is natural, strong, and simple; rambunctious, wholesome and uncomplicated. Lee's description of Kit is focused and written with clarity. Unlike the description of Darmesteter who morphs from one distorted shape to another, Kit embodies multiple desirable attributes. Kit is brimming with good qualities, at odds with both the diseased Darmesteter and the 'unfit' Mary. Kit has the face of Annie Meyer, a woman idealized and loved by Lee, who died prematurely: she is the embodiment and visage of women adored by Lee—before Mary Robinson became her favourite—a return to a time prior to this catastrophic relationship. Darmesteter's and Mary's hope for a sibling relationship with Lee is usurped by the 'schoolboy' Kit, who gives Lee back a sense of authority, a power shift. Kit is also an admirer, rather than a creative—perhaps something Lee wanted after the relationship with poet and intellectual Mary.

In *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*, Martha Vicinus uses a short selection of letters from this period of Lee's correspondence to her mother to examine the same-sex relationships between Lee and Mary Robinson, and Lee and Kit Thomson, and to suggest how tropes of lesbian-like relationships are evident in Lee's fictional works.²⁴ Likewise, Peter Gunn and Vineta Colby have drawn on the 30 August

²³ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 30, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #320. Colby College Archives.

²⁴ Vicinus, pp. 143-170. Vicinus uses letters dated July 24, 1887; August 30, 1887; and September 27, 1887.

letter to suggest a reason for the schism between Lee and Mary post-Mary's marriage which Lee scholars believe fundamentally destroyed their relationship.²⁵

I wish here to explore the surviving correspondence between Lee and her mother, and Lee and Mary, during the period August 25, 1887 to August 26, 1888 and suggest an alternate reading of these letters, in particular those omitted from Vicinus, Gunn and Colby.²⁶

Purely Platonic

On September 8, 1887 Lee writes again to her mother, still overwrought at the prospect of the impending marriage. Dismissing the 'Mary may be perfectly right' attitude of a month prior, she returns to questioning the choice Mary has made. Lee confides in her mother her opinion that the pair's marriage must remain 'the meeting of true minds', and that this platonic relationship also appears to be Darmesteter and Mary's plan. Lee explains:

I have read his [James's] letters to her [Mary]. His attitude is charming, and the only one could wish for in a husband. To her: grave, quite indemonstrably absolutely not lovemaking! Full of appreciation and tender, quiet, amused, almost paternal affection [...] [Mary's] affection is of a very curious order. It is love; I don't believe she has pitied him once. She looks up to him enormously; but there is no philandery whatsoever. He himself seems to dislike lovemaking very much.²⁷

Yet despite Lee's concerns for Mary, her language regarding Darmesteter has softened considerably, with the quivering mass of clammy deformity replaced by a gentle, quiet and 'paternal' soul. Darmesteter's letters transcend the physicality of his body and it becomes possible to glimpse, as Mary has, the steady and generous intellect of the man. The repetition of 'lovemaking' – 'absolutely not lovemaking', 'he himself seems to dislike lovemaking very much'—emphasizes Lee's fixation on the physicality, or lack of physicality, proposed in their relationship. In fact, Lee portrays Mary as the more active partner: the syntactical structure of 'She looks up to him enormously; but there is no philandery whatsoever' suggests that Mary is the active, and more dominant in the

²⁵ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee, Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 118-119. Gunn draws on letters dated August 25, 1887; and August 30, 1887.

²⁶ This chapter draws on unpublished letters from the correspondence between August 25, 1887-October 1, 1887. Most notably September 2, 5, 6, 18, 26, and 29; October 1, 1887. My transcriptions of these particular letters can be found in the appendix.

²⁷ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 8, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #325. Colby College Archives.

blossoming partnership. Whilst Lee manages to find a more moderate ground from which to observe Darmesteter, her opinions on his physical body, and the physical side of marriage, appears to be both her own, and her brother Eugene's, primary concern. She writes:

The condition which Eugene thought absurd, the platonic one, he himself proposed to Mary and to Mr. Robinson, and James, telling him that I thought Mary quite unfit for an ordinary marriage, he spontaneously repeated to me. Mr. R[obinson] who feels acutely on the subject, not only of humpbacks but of anaemic women marrying, considering it a crime, pooh poohs this condition. [...] with the condition he has had [Darmesteter], I think it is the only marriage which for her sake and his, I could wish Mary to make [...] I think it well that Mary should see that everyone thinks that the marriage is possible only on the terms of no children.²⁸

Darmesteter seems to have proposed the idea of a platonic marriage to Mary, and to her father Mr Robinson, at the beginning of September. On September 6, Lee writes to her mother that 'the man [James Darmesteter] is really to promise that the marriage will remain purely platonic'. This fixation on the non-consummation of the marriage perhaps betrays an element of jealousy on behalf of Lee—or as Vicinus frames it a sense of her 'violation'—but it is, equally importantly, informed by her diligent reading in natural history.²⁹ Lee was intensely interested in the scientific offshoots of social and evolutionary theory, the science of eugenics, and the control of the inheritance of pathological and acquired characteristics. Lee is adamant that the relationship must engender 'no children', it is the only option in a marriage between a humpback and an anaemic, a position informed by her reading.

This focus on the biological implications of the intimate relationship between Mary and Darmesteter is touched upon again in Lee's letter home to Matilda on September 27, albeit with a very significant reference:

As to E's letter: I have shown it to Mary. Because it so happens that I have long made up my mind (when reading Miss. Clapperton's book I discussed it all with Bella Duffy) that the error of instinct which rejects all such means of indulging passion without accepting its natural consequences and burdens is perfectly correct.³⁰

Bella Duffy (translator of *Mnemonic Psychology*, see Chapter I), a close friend of Lee and Mary, was Lee's sounding board for this discussion regarding contraceptives and pregnancy.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Vicinus, p. 160.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

Lee was adamant that any passion should *naturally* culminate in pregnancy, indulgence must be paid for with ‘consequences and burdens’.

In earlier correspondence dated July 17, 1887, (prior to her knowledge of the engagement of Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter) Lee had written [to Matilda] that she remains in contact with Miss Clapperton, whose book she had reviewed. The article is not catalogued in any of Lee’s archives—but Clapperton, a student and follower of George Eliot—had arranged for Lee to meet a close friend of Eliot’s after the publication of the review. Clapperton’s work *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (1885) was a key work in the debate surrounding social reform and population control. In *Scientific Meliorism*, Clapperton considers and modernizes Malthusian tropes of population reform and in doing so expands the breadth of melioration, including the working classes, through a highly controlled, yet organized, and inclusive society. The sociologist Lester Ward provided an introduction to the volume, which sums up Clapperton’s meliorism: it is ‘humanitarianism, without sentiment, it is dynamic, not ethical, improvement through cold calculation’ which aims ‘to create conditions in which suffering can no longer exist’.³¹ Importantly, Clapperton recognizes within *Scientific Meliorism* that sexual instincts and relations are integral to the happiness of humanity, and should not be restricted:

Now my thesis is [...] We possess a power hitherto unknown; I mean a power of controlling the physical conditions of reproduction, through the application of human intelligence; and to use this power in favour of general happiness and well-being is to obey *the highest law of nature*.³²

For Clapperton, happiness and well-being is in obedience with the natural law, even if this means the prevention of pregnancy. This is clearly at odds with Lee’s statement above in the letter to Matilda on September 27, where burden and consequence is natural.

Clapperton recognizes sexual congress as a human need rather than a drive implicated in moral questions of vice: ‘nature never forbids him [man] to eat when he is hungry, and to drink when he is thirsty, provided he does both with discretion [...] regards sexual instinct the action of nature is precisely similar’.³³ Moreover, she recognizes that this advocacy of sexual freedom would fundamentally increase the population, rather than control it. Rather than waiting for immediate or ultimate checks

³¹ Lester Ward, ‘Introduction’, in Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1885), p. ix.

³² Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1885), p. 96. Clapperton’s italics.

³³ Clapperton, p. 96.

to this excess of population, Clapperton suggests what Malthus designates the 'preventative check': a check on the birth rate via reasoning and the calculation of consequences.³⁴ Clapperton's preventative check differs extensively from that of Malthus in that she proposes the use of family limitation devices, rather than strict sexual continence. She writes that celibacy, forced on an individual is a 'cruel lot',³⁵ that abstinence from the 'joys of married life' can only be occasioned by 'the most intelligent' and that birth control is an effective way of 'readdressing the balance of natural selection'.³⁶

For Lee, however, the use of preventative measures is fundamentally immoral:

I consider all the French and Mrs. Besant's practices an abomination, bringing marriage to the level of prostitution and only opening the door to unnatural wickedness [...] of all kinds.³⁷

Annie Besant's 'practices', and the practices of the French nation, similarly to Clapperton's, stemmed from a Malthusian origin, but alongside this improvement of society through population control, Besant was fully committed to improving the lives of women of child-bearing age. Her treatise *The Law of Population: Its Consequences, and its Bearing Upon Human Conduct and Morals* published in 1887, focused on the misery prevalent in the lives of women of all classes, and the use of fertility control in allaying this suffering.³⁸ It is important to note the movement from Malthus's title *An Essay on the Principle of Population or a View of its Past and Present Effects in Human Happiness* to that of a 'Law', and also the shift away from 'human happiness' to 'conduct and morals'. A shift that I suggest would align Lee's mode of thought with Besant's. Besant's opinions were fresh in Lee's mind: she had on June 19, 1887 visited a meeting of The Fabians, on St James' Street London. She writes of the event that 'Mrs. Besant, of Malthusian fame, made the best speech'.³⁹

Besant and Clapperton shared a connection in that both were members of Karl Pearson's *Men and Women's Club* (1885-1889): a group of London intellectuals who met

³⁴ T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population or a View of its Past and Present Effects in Human Happiness* (London: J. Johnson, 1803), p. 21.

³⁵ Clapperton, p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 95

³⁷ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 8, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #325. Colby College Archives.

³⁸ Annie Besant, *The Law of Population: Its Consequences, and Its Bearing Upon Human Conduct and Morals* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1887). Included in the back of Besant's polemic was an advertisement for Lee's article 'Comparative Aesthetics' for the *Contemporary Review*.

³⁹ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, June 17, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #295. Colby College Archives.

to discuss the Woman Question, relations between the sexes, sex-work and sexuality. Pearson also argued for preventative checks that would ‘allow women to make sexual choices without necessarily assuming the burden of maternity’.⁴⁰ Lee felt strongly enough about this to write to Pearson shortly after reading his work *The Moral Basis of Socialism*, at least one year prior to the engagement of Mary and Darmesteter. University College London Library Archives, who hold this letter, have dated it at 1886—as Lee had omitted the year from the page. Pearson’s tract was published by William Reeves in 1887, and whilst Lee does not mention the work by name, it is clear they are one and the same. Perhaps UCL have dated the letter incorrectly, or Lee was provided with an early copy or manuscript to review. Nevertheless, Lee’s opinions regarding sexual morality were already in place prior to Mary’s betrothal. She writes to Pearson:

Will you allow me to say that, for the moment, I feel a great aversion to certain resolutions of the population question which you have not actually recommended, but at all events not blamed? I am herein very much opposed to my friend Miss Clapperton. To her, and to you perhaps, I seem a retrograde and a sentimentalist. But I plead guilty to extreme conservatism whenever it is a question of roughly touching certain instinctive repugnances of our nature. They may be wrong; but on the whole they are more likely, to be correct, and we should treat them carefully and reverently, even if we eventually decide against them. To me the instinctive aversion of English men and women against those practices which are rife in France seems a correct and holy one: we must not buy temporary peace from an economic difficulty at the price of discouraging, instead of encouraging, such moral self-restraint as is, if not practised, at least theoretically admitted. Your own remarks about Luther’s attitude on the marriage question seem to me very suggestive when applied to the question of neo-Malthusianism. It is not one of mere bodily health, nor the increase in numbers. They give an instinct therein by removing the natural responsibilities naturally attached to it is surely an immoral thing. It is to track people that they may eat their cake and keep it; and, despite the enormous advantage which such methods offer in disposing of certain economic problems, I cannot but consider them as akin to the practices of that Roman emperor and those Renaissance cardinals, who found out a simple means of eating as many dinners as they liked. Such practices seem to me to bring us fearfully onto the brink of unnatural horrors of all kinds; and I cannot but remark that the people (the upper classes here, for instance) who use them, are steeped in a corruption of which only a very small section of our English well to do people can have an idea. Surely chastity is a virtue not merely because it prevents the Earth being overpopulated, (or under populated, as the case may be) but because it leaves the mind freer for such feelings and

⁴⁰ Theodore M. Porter, *Karl Pearson: The Scientific Life in a Statistical Age* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 159.

enjoyments as can further, and cannot do anything except further, the happiness of the world at large.⁴¹

Lee's concern with Pearson's tract is that it does not argue stringently enough against neo-Malthusian population controls. She believes that chastity is the only morally correct limitation on population. Pearson himself does not stipulate that artificial means of birth control will reduce the numbers of individuals in cities, and of the working poor, he merely alludes to the benefits: 'far be it from me to assert that neo-Malthusianism can solve the problem'.⁴² Lee believes that the desire for expansion of the intellect would replace that of the sexual and reproductive urge, providing a universal meliorism; a 'happiness' for 'the world at large'. In this way, rejecting the sexual drive and replacing it with a focus on self-improvement via education, Lee is proposing a universal morality based on her own life-model. The 'true marriage of minds' and 'Platonism' she proposes for the Darmesteter-Robinsons, is a replication of her own means of existence and relationships with others. Lee's reading on the subject of evolution and heredity provides her with a scientific basis for her personal morality, and, furthermore, allows her to propose this morality as the basis not only for the marriage of Mary and Darmesteter, but wider society.

French Men and French Methods

Another basis for Lee's apprehension regarding the marriage of Mary to Darmesteter is his nationality:

Mary and her man have no right to tie themselves together; but if they insist upon doing so (recognizing as they openly do that they would be criminal in producing children) let them honourably bear the difficulties and bitternesses of their false position, without giving way to instincts whose natural results would be criminal. I warned Mary of the probability of a **Frenchman**, who said he wished to have no children resorting to such methods; but he seems to have no idea of the kind. At all events, if they keep honourably to their contract, they may be miserable, but they will not be committing a grave, antisocial offence – that of removing the very *raison d'être* of marriage. And I would far rather see Mary unhappy than dishonoured by what I consider an abominable practice. Of course 'tis a matter of opinion [my emphasis].⁴³

⁴¹ Vernon Lee, to Karl Pearson, March 13, 1883. University College, London, Library Archives.

⁴² Karl Pearson, *The Moral Basis of Socialism* (London: William Reeves, 1887), p. 25.

⁴³ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 8, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home #325. Colby College Archives. Spelling in context, my emphasis.

It is not that Darmesteter is personally disreputable, but that his whole nation is so supposedly preoccupied with sex they named two contraceptive methods after it; the French method and the French Letter, Shirley Green's *The Curious History of Contraception* (1971) perhaps also suggests a reason for Lee's focus on Darmesteter's nationality, and by extension, his potential sexual activities. Green discusses the use of a sponge as a means to prevent pregnancy, being the most popular method in France in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.⁴⁴ Translating an extract from *Le Rideau Levé* (The Drawn Curtain, 1786), Green notes that this French method involves 'wet[ting] this sponge in water mixed with a few drops of brandy' which is inserted 'exactly over the mouth of the womb'. The sponge will then soak up into its pores the lover's semen, and the brandy will mix with it, destroying 'its power and essence'.⁴⁵ One-hundred years later, Besant supports this method in her tract *The Law of Population* (1887). Yet Besant is more prescriptive: she suggests that

A piece of very fine sponge, about the size of a large walnut when fairly dry, should be soaked in a solution of [...] Dr Palfrey's powder; a piece of very narrow tape can be fixed around the sponge to facilitate its withdrawal; this sponge should be slipped up into the passage as far as it will go, and need not be removed until the following morning.⁴⁶

In her text, the French brandy added to the sponge in Mirabeau's *Le Rideau Levé*, is replaced by a more potent spermicide – Dr Palfrey's powder:

A desert spoonful of powder – composed of sulpho-carboate of zinc, and dried sulphate of zinc; of each 1 ounce, alum 4 ounces – is recommended [in a solute of quinine and water]. It is wise to label the bottle in which the solution is kept poison.⁴⁷

This rather noxious and corrosive solution with which to soak the sponge is, according to Besant, fairly standard practice, and should be utilized as an alternative to conjugal prudence. Besant differs from Green's opinions on the definition of *the French method*, by indicating that the check 'most generally used' in France is 'that of withdrawal'. Either way, neither method is reliant on abstinence and chastity, and therein lies the problem for Lee.

Whilst Clapperton and Besant advocated limiting population, both were aware of the issues surrounding the procurement of 'Malthusian' devices and the public opinion of such methods. Besant recognizes that

⁴⁴ Shirley Green, *The Curious History of Contraception* (London: Ebury Press, 1971), p. 102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴⁶ Besant, p. 32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Many people, perfectly good-hearted, but somewhat narrow-minded, strongly object to the idea of conjugal prudence and regard scientific checks to population as a “violation of nature’s laws” and a “frustration” of nature’s ends...[well,] to limit the family is no more a violation of nature’s laws than to preserve the sick by medical skill.⁴⁸

Besant concludes *The Law of Population* with reference to Darwin’s law of inheritance and Herbert Spencer’s term ‘survival of the fittest’. She writes:

The feeble, the deformed, the helpless are killed out in the brute nature; in human nature they are guarded, tended, nourished, and they hand on to their offspring their own disabilities. Scientific checks to population do for man what the struggle for existence does for the brutes, they enable man to control the production of new human beings; those who suffer from hereditary diseases, who have consumption or insanity in the family, might marry if they so wished, but would preserve the race from the deterioration which results from propagating disease.⁴⁹

The language used by Besant is a (presumably) unintentional echo of the language used by Lee in the letter dated August 30, 1887. This moral society, and the benefits that develop from such a society, who partake in this assistance of the ill and disabled, are negated by a much bleaker language of ‘race deterioration’ and prevention. Besant, and the wider eugenicist community, strongly advocated conjugal planning in the case of hereditary illness. But for Lee, this birth-control was not enough. Lee has observed in Mary a desire, which she fears may be awakened by Darmesteter, and worries intensely that he would not, because he is a Frenchman, be able to refuse. She writes:

I got Mary to listen to me at last, the day before yesterday, and expounded to her how terribly false and difficult a position they were preparing for themselves; for whatever the man may be, and after all he appears to be a man, Mary is not the iceberg she imagines herself. She was much struck, but only from the point of possibly making him unhappy in the future (no idea of doing a thing dangerous and immoral, per se) so she wrote to him to ask whether, having had all these fine things expounded to him, he wd. still have her. Of course he will. He must be an astounding greenhorn, a sort of seminarist without a notion of the flesh or the devil, or with astounding belief in his powers of sleeping all night.⁵⁰

The concern over the ‘dangerous’ act, and the attachment of flesh with the devil, is evidence of Lee’s puritanical morals concerning on this relationship. Once more, the dangerous potential for ‘unnatural and sickening’ progeny is evoked in the letter, reminiscent of Lee’s remark about Pareto’s specimen jars filled with cripples and

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁰ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 24, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #331. Colby College Archives.

abortions.⁵¹ Darmesteter is a French Jew, a creature, a horror, a Quasimodo (also French), a humpback, and whilst Mary suffers from a variety of female maladies, such as anaemia and a delicate constitution, Lee notes she could still be roused into desire.

Clapperton's *Scientific Meliorism* also questions the passions and morality of the French, portraying the French Revolution as 'a wild saturnalia', extolling 'social freedom for man' but for the woman 'entire subjugation'.⁵² Clapperton considers the work of (the French man) Rousseau, and in dismay notes his female characters are dutiful in pleasing men, aiming to 'console them, to make their lives agreeable'.⁵³ Clapperton is aware that this misogynistic miasma has crossed the channel, with the 'tendency of the English race to imitate French manners and customs'.⁵⁴ This is one area in which Lee agrees with Clapperton, that the French attitude to women and sexuality is unrestrainable, both personally and cartographically. This extends to the French's unconscionable literature too: Lee is infuriated on September 8, that whilst Mary stayed with family friends, the Rosenbergs at Earl's Terrace, William Rosenberg left in Mary's room '**immoral French novels**' [my emphasis].⁵⁵ Was this Rosenberg's attempt to educate the innocent Mary prior to her marriage to a French man? Whatever the motive, Lee was assuredly furious; yet this attitude towards the French, particularly the corrupting nature of French Realism, is not only problematic in relation to Mary as reader. Lee's concern is for all readers of French literature and the moral contagion spread by its novels. This reveals a shift in perspective: in considering Lee's reading and social networks, there is a sense that the issue with Mary and Darmesteter is not simply personal, but is informed by a neo-Malthusian debate. Mary's relationship becomes a text to be read, and for Lee, this text is understood via the intertext (Besant, Clapperton, Malthus, Darwin, and Pearson).

Published a year before Mary's proposal to Darmesteter, *Baldwin* (previously discussed in Chapter II in relation to the ethical parallel between vivisection and slavery) considers both the evolution of morality (in 'The Responsibilities of Belief'); and the immorality of the Gallic *roman* (in 'On Novels') —most notably the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (as Clapperton did in *Scientific Meliorism*), and Guy de Maupassant's *Une Vie* (1883). Maupassant's novella is such a senseless example of the attempt to attune morality

⁵¹ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 30, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #320. Colby College Archives.

⁵² Clapperton, p. 168.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁵⁵ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 8, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #325. Colby College Archives. Spelling in context. My emphasis.

through the handling of what Lee describes as ‘indecent’ material, that she believes it does little but fill ‘her imagination and emotion’ and drags her down by the weight of immorality, its ‘sudden, complete, loathsome revelation’ is ‘more degrading than the actual degradation in reality’.⁵⁶ Maupassant’s heroine, Jeanne is a convent-educated young woman who is betrothed to the Vicomte de Lemare after a fairy tale courtship: ‘the discovery, by a pure and ideal-minded woman, brought up in happy ignorance of the brutish realities of life’.⁵⁷ On her wedding night, Jeanne is forced to perform her conjugal duties, an act for which she is unprepared. Unable to satisfy his passions with his terrified wife, the Vicomte engages in extra-marital affairs which he freely divulges to Jeanne. The novella is filled with despair and melancholy: Jeanne begins her relationship with the Vicomte with excitement and romance, but this is shattered on the wedding night, and is completely eradicated after two pregnancies, one resulting in miscarriage. Jeanne is also bored, unsatisfied with her life, and lonely. Baldwin—Lee’s dialogic second-self, as discussed in Chapter II—argues that works such as Maupassant’s ‘stimulate instincts which require not stimulation, but repression’, and furthermore they ‘betray the mission of all intellectual work’ being the development of the ‘higher sides of our nature at the expense of the lower’.⁵⁸ This is Baldwin’s mission, to progress humanity through morality, and while at odds with Clapperton’s meliorism both aim at the final result of contentment.

Baldwin is concerned with morality and progress. Baldwin argues that morality is a prerequisite for society as there must be rules: ‘[r]ules of the road are unnecessary where there are neither roads nor carriages; and morality would be unnecessary, indeed inconceivable, where there are no human interests in collision’.⁵⁹ Morality has evolved because of the social development of mankind and Lee argues that it is conducive to happiness, a statement that maps directly onto Darwin’s own in *The Descent of Man*. She continues:

[...] I am but a drop in the great moral flood called progress; that my own morality is but a result of the morality of millions of other creatures who have preceded me and surround me now; that my morality is an essential contribution to the morality of millions of creatures who will come after me; that on all sides, the more society develops, there is a constantly increasing intricacy of moral connection between the present, the past and the future.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 219-220.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Morality is shown by Lee to be stratigraphical in form, a chain of heredity and evolution following a similar model to the scholar's copy book, but it is also connective across temporal boundaries, akin to the blotting-book mind. Baldwin's recognition that his principles are but a link in the interconnectedness of the moral development of the race—the 'increasing intricacy of moral connection'—echoes the way in which Lee visualizes history (in an archaeological setting) in *The Spirit of Rome* where she notes that she 'had a sense of the infinite intricacy of all reality'.⁶¹ Both history and morality for Lee are non-linear, yet interconnected; the intricacies of the past, present, and future show progression, but this is not undeviating but branched, co-linear, and woven together.

These nobler moments are not moments of the revelation of reality; they are the moments of transfiguration of the possibility; and for this reason they are much more useful and worthy. They are in truth the sports, in Darwinian language, of our nature: out of these nobler accidents comes progress.⁶²

Lee suggests that, through a process akin to Darwinian evolution, our morals become more finely tuned through the process of reading: intertextuality supports improvement.⁶³ And works such as *Une Vie*, which stimulate the wrong instincts and diminish the reader's morals, are representative of the nation: '[t]he immorality of the French novel is simply the immorality of French society!'⁶⁴

Mary and Darmesteter married in March 1888, and were seemingly happily married—with no children—until Darmesteter's death on October 19, 1894. Shortly after her loss, Mary penned a short biographical sketch in tribute to her husband for inclusion in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*. Focusing in the main on his intellectual and academic merits, Mary also included a few lines on the upbringing of the youngest Darmesteter. She wrote that:

James was the youngest son [...] Work was difficult to procure: privations were many: and the close air [of the Marais Quarter inn Paris] and inappropriate food affected the health of James, who never grew to his full size, his stature being slightly deformed, and health always frail.⁶⁵

She goes on to say:

⁶¹ Vernon Lee, *The Spirit of Rome* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1906), p. 141.

⁶² Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 215.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁵ Mary Robinson Darmesteter, 'James Darmesteter', in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1906), p. 444.

He resembled in an extraordinary degree the illustrious poet of the Recanati; and when he visited Florence in 1887 the Florentines dubbed him 'Il piccolo Leopardi'.⁶⁶

Mary's note that Darmesteter was the little Leopardi repeats Lee's early impressions of his resemblance to the poet, which we can presume she shared with Mary. But what is most interesting about Mary's biography of her husband is the short passage where she reveals that Darmesteter was not a 'cripple and humpback' from birth, but rather suffered from the misfortunes of an impoverished upbringing. Likewise, Colby quotes Sylvaine Marandon, noting Darmesteter was 'un homme contrefait', who was 'dwarfed and crippled by a childhood disease'.⁶⁷ In considering Lee's concern regarding the inheritance of Darmesteter's physical characteristics then, it must be that she either was not aware of the nature of his illness, and the impact of his childhood, or that she still considered the inheritance of acquired characteristics a possibility.

I would like to challenge the first of these propositions by suggesting that both Mary and Lee, as Mary's confidant, understood the nature of Darmesteter's previous illness and disfigurement. She writes: 'with the condition *he has had*, I think it is the only marriage which for her sake and his, I could wish Mary to make'.⁶⁸ The telling use of 'he has had' suggests that Lee is aware of the true reason for Darmesteter's disfigurement: the lack of nutrition in childhood, and living in impoverished circumstances. But despite this, Lee insists that the relationship between Mary and her fiancé remains a platonic one. If both Mary and Darmesteter's conditions are not congenital, then any concern on Lee's behalf must stem from a preservation of a Lamarckian form of heredity. Towheed posits that Lee rejects a Lamarckian theory of inheritance,⁶⁹ yet this is gleaned from a post-1900 series of examples. It appears likely, that prior to this period, Lee's evolutionary paradigms encapsulated the inheritance of both pathological and acquired characteristics.

Jean-Marie-Antoine Lanessan's *Le Transformisme evolution de la matière et des êtres vivants* [Transformism and Creationism: Contribution to the History of Transformation from Antiquity to the Present], published in 1883 was part of a French movement in the late 1800s that popularized a neo-Lamarckian theory of inheritance. Lee's copy of Lanessan's *Le Transformisme*, still held at the Harold Acton Archives, suggests that this work was fundamental to her understanding of evolutionary theory and ethics during the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 444.

⁶⁷ Colby, p. 121. Marandon's *L'œuvre poétique de Mary Robinson, 1857-1944* (1967).

⁶⁸ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 8, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #325. Colby College Archives.

⁶⁹ Towheed, p. 34.

period of Mary Robinson's engagement to James Darmesteter. *Le Transformisme* remained in Lee's collection over forty years, and whilst there is little evidence of marginalia, all pages have been cut and show signs of interaction. It is one of only a few pre-Mendelian works on evolution in the archive.⁷⁰ Lanessan's work focused on the influence of acquired characteristics and environment on the living organism, and furthermore, it engaged with a form of social meliorism, similarly to Clapperton, stressed co-operation in the creation of a better life and world.⁷¹ Lanessan's chapter on Lamarck stresses his support for the hypothesis of the transmission of innate and acquired characteristics, including the heritable propensity for disease or constitution.

Les conditions du milieu gèneateur ne nous sont que fort peu connues; mais toutes les fois qu'un individu, place dans le milieu cosmique où ont vécu ses ancêtres pendant de lonhues générations, présente quellque caratère a été determine en lui par les conditions génératrices, soit que les parents en aient héité d'ancêtres qui l'avaient acquis dans un milieu different, soit qu'il ait pris naissance dans l'individu lui-même par suit des conditions auxquelles il s'est trouve soumis pendant qu'il faisait encore partie de l'organisme maternel ou paternel.⁷²

Here, Lanessan suggests that the offspring can inherit a condition to which he/ she is subjected to as part of the maternal or paternal body. This is essentially an example of an environmental impact on the organs of reproduction, which can occur at any time to the parent prior to the birth of progeny. Darwin's *Origin of Species* followed Lamarck's conjecture that the use and disuse of organs is heritable, and considered the inheritance of 'accidental mutations' a possibility.⁷³ Therefore, it would be perfectly reasonable and rational for Lee to have concerns regarding any future children of Mary and Darmesteter. It could be fully argued that the impact of Darmesteter's stunted growth, due to malnutrition, would have had a discernible effect on the development of his sexual

⁷⁰ Gregor Mendel's experiments on plant hybridization (1856-1863) redefined the way in which biological inheritance was understood. Mendel's work only became well known in the early 1900s, after work confirming his thesis was carried out by Hugo de Vries. Mendel's work was adopted by scientists such as Karl Pearson (mentioned earlier) and William Bateson, whose *Problems of Genetics* Lee annotated heavily, especially in response to its sections on Richard Semon. William Bateson, *Problems of Genetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), pp. 190-199, 210.

⁷¹ Paul Lawrence Farber, 'French Evolutionary Ethics', in *Biology and the Foundation of Ethics* ed. Jane Maienschein & Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 84-98 (p. 86).

⁷² Jean-Marie-Antoine Lanessan, *Le Transformisme evolution de la matière et des êtres vivants* (Paris: Octave Doin, 1883), p. 45. 'The conditions of the generative environment are but little known to us; but whenever some individual places himself in a cosmic environment in which his ancestors have lived for many generations, he has a that has been character determined by the generative conditions of the parents. These acquired changes born in the individual could be due to the conditions to which he was subjected to as part of the maternal or paternal organism'. My translation.

⁷³ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection: Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, Sixth edition (London: John Murray, 1873), p. 108.

organs, and the quality of his spermatozoa. Likewise, Mary's weakened constitution and faints brought about by anaemia could cause potential fertility issues, or mutations in the development of the female egg. This was still an area concerning to Lee in 1899. Lee's copy of *L'instinct sexuel: Evolution et dissolution* (1899) by the physician Charles Féré may be able to shed some light on these concerns. Lee marked with a double line in the margins next to the following:

En réalité cet atavisme partiel reproduit les déformations tératologiques que l'on voit se manifester dans des conditions défectueuses de la nutrition pendant la période embryonnaire.⁷⁴

The page, from which this quotation is an extract, concern the heredity of partial atavism brought about by defective nourishment. Whilst this discussion of retrogression and degeneration is too late to affect Lee's opinions on Darmesteter and Mary, Lee is obviously moved to highlight this passage as relevant. Perhaps this interest in embryonic atavism was triggered by her brother Eugene Lee-Hamilton's marriage to Annie Holdsworth in 1898 (as shall be discussed in Chapter VI) and her worries for their possible offspring. Or perhaps this passage resonated with Lee because of her treatment of Mary and Darmesteter in the early days of their engagement.

I would suggest then, that in the case of Mary Robinson's engagement to James Darmesteter, Lee's proposition of a platonic marriage for the pair was certainly driven by her personal morality, but that this was underpinned by, and indeed in dialogue with, an acute understanding of evolutionary theory in the latter-half of the nineteenth century. Whereas Clapperton and Besant recognized the importance of a sexual relationship as a fundamental human need, and proposed adequate family planning to limit the production of unwanted or unsuitable offspring, Lee's interest in the various intellectual strata of neo-Lamarckian discourse on top of her personal morality enabled her to legitimize her opinions on Mary and Darmesteter's marriage. Where previous readings of this period have focused in on Lee's jealousy as the motivator for insisting on Mary and Darmesteter's celibacy (which was undoubtedly an element), I hope to have shown that Lee's opinions—rightly or wrongly—were based on the 'blottings' of her previous readings.

⁷⁴ Charles Féré, *L'instinct sexuel: Evolution et dissolution* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1899). Harold Acton Archive, VL 155.3 FER. 'In reality, this partial atavism reproduces the teratological deformations that we see manifest in defective conditions of nutrition during the embryonic period'. My translation.

Chapter VI

Mediating a Male Malady

My malady lasted a good time; it left me weak in body, but at least mentally healthy.¹

-Christoph Rheinart, *Ottolie* (1883)

Writing to Kit Anstruther Thomson on December 13, 1902 Lee exclaims:

E. has no right to have children [...] it's the taint communicated to the race. Of course, he considers himself quite sound, or affects to. I think that is as usual in such cases, there is the saving grace of not realising anything except one's inclinations.²

This letter regarding the marriage of her brother Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Annie Holdsworth bears a striking resemblance to the letter from Lee to her mother during the period of Mary's engagement to James Darmesteter. Why would Lee once again be concerned about the transmissibility of taints to the race? This chapter aims to answer this question whilst considering the complex relationship of Lee and Eugene. I attempt to unravel the ways in which Lee sought to mediate her brother's illness and recovery, through her personal correspondence and through her public rendering of Eugene in her own fictional works. These letters serve Lee as an *aide memoire*, they provide a textual rendering of Eugene's symptoms and treatment, a scholar's copy book of his illness. What Lee does with Eugene's malady is to fictionalize it, and amalgamate it with her psychological reading to produce a blotting-book pressing of her brother's neurasthenia. This chapter will also consider Lee and Eugene's dialogic relationship, and the cross-fertility between their texts, foremost the pairing of Lee's 'Dionea' with Eugene's poem, 'The New Medusa'.³

Lee's understanding of the progression her brother's illness appears to have a different effect upon her writing: there is still the sense of intertextuality—Lee's

¹ Vernon Lee, *Ottolie: An Eighteenth Century Idyll* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1883), p. 122.

² Vernon Lee, to Kit Anstruther Thomson, December 13, 1902, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #836. Colby College Archives.

³ Catherine Maxwell, Vernon Lee's *Handling of Words*, in *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Michael D. Hurley and Marcus Waithe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 282-297 (p. 284). Maxwell writes: 'The continuing dialogic exchange between mother and daughter was supplemented by Violet's beloved older half-brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, who had firm views about his sister's education, her reading [...]'.

understanding of Mary and Darmesteter's relationship undoubtedly fed into her reading of Eugene as text, but Eugene himself becomes a fundamental part of Lee's textual landscape too. He, and his writing, become subsumed in Lee's own works: he is the thinly disguised Christoph in *Otilie*, and the Duke in *Ariadne in Mantua*. Furthermore, Lee's reading (and understanding) of neurasthenia appears to have begun *after* Eugene's diagnosis: his illness is the foundation stone of Lee's intertextual references to neuroses within her works. Notably this has echoes with analysis via hypnotism, a remedy Eugene was eager to try out.

During the autumn of 1864 Eugene Lee-Hamilton, half-brother to Vernon Lee, began his formal education at Oriel College at the University of Oxford. Prior to this move into British educational life, Eugene's schooling had been sporadic, disparate, and led by governesses, tutors, and his mother Matilda. These years of eclectic and unconventional schooling provided Eugene with a curiosity and sharpness of mind but also ensured that he lacked many of the social skills requisite for college life. He told his close friend Linda Villari, who reported it in an obituary of Eugene, that 'it was a mistake to enter college without having gone to a public school'.⁴ His 'ignorance of school-boy life' kept him out of touch with his contemporaries at Oriel.⁵ Yet, despite this lack of social education, Villari suggests in her obituary that Eugene 'certainly burnt the candle at both ends'. This is a portrayal of the poet a little at odds with the descriptions of Eugene by many Lee scholars and biographers: the older brother overshadowed by his younger sibling's genius, or the bed-ridden invalid.⁶ Lee was just eight years of age when Eugene left the family and headed to England, and just sixteen years old when Eugene returned home from the diplomatic service in Paris in 1873 with the illness that would leave him paralysed for twenty-three years.

As in the previous chapter, I will focus particularly on the correspondence between Lee, Eugene, and other family members: in this case, a rare and historically valuable example of a well-documented onset, progression and eventual recovery from a neurological or psychological disorder in a male, within the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries. Eugene's mental health is touched upon by the bibliographer Harvey

⁴ Linda Villari, 'A Master of the Sonnet: Eugene Lee-Hamilton, born 1845. Died September 7, 1907' *The Albany Review*, Volume III, April-September 1908 (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908), pp. 182-191 (p. 183).

⁵ Ibid., p. 183.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 183-184.

T. Lyon in 'A Publishing History of the Writings of Eugene Lee-Hamilton' (1957), when he notes his paralysis was 'a textbook version of the Oedipus complex': a suggestion perhaps of a scholar's copy book nature of his illness.⁷ Catherine Maxwell focuses on the half-siblings' use of the recovered sculptural relic and the theme of the god in exile.⁸ George MacBeth in 'Lee-Hamilton and the Romantic Agony' suggests that '[t]he therapeutic motive of writing, to exorcise phantoms as well as to pass time and soothe the urge for fame, made Lee-Hamilton his own psychiatrist'.⁹ Perhaps as MacBeth suggests, Eugene's writing was a cathartic act that enabled his recovery, but I also would like to argue that Lee herself was central to this rehabilitation, directing Eugene through the stratified layers of his psyche to deal with the psychosomatic causes of his illness.

When Eugene's illness began in 1873 it was diagnosed as a simple case of vasomotor disorder [a disorder that increases or decreases the blood flow in a localized area]. Eventually, Eugene was considered finally cured of neurasthenia and an auto-suggestive disorder in 1896 [an auto-suggestive disorder is a physical illness manifested or aggravated by a mental factor]. The fluctuation of his symptoms and diagnoses during the twenty-three years of disability was in part due to his physical invalidity, and partly due to his reticence to accept a psychological diagnosis. Under the influence of a psychosomatic malady, Eugene was entirely bed-bound; strapped into a specially-made, wheeled frame, and draped with blankets and furs to protect his body from the cold. Even when Eugene had tired of the diagnoses of local specialists, he was unable to travel extensively to find a cure. Importantly, Lee became the arbiter between Eugene—who remained in Florence—and his doctors, who resided in London, Paris and Heidelberg.

Malady is a flexible enough term to describe the evolution of Eugene's nervous disorder and connote the various indicators and prognoses given to him by his specialists. Most significantly it is a term that was used by Linda Villari in 'A Master of the Sonnet', which provides a timeline of Eugene's 'malady' up until his death.¹⁰ Secondly, the term is a nod to George Cheyne's 1733 work *The English Malady, or a Treatise of Nervous Disease of*

⁷ Harvey T. Lyon, 'A Publishing History of the Writings of Eugene Lee-Hamilton', *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America*, 51, 2 (1957), pp. 103-182 (p. 141).

⁸ Catherine Maxwell, 'Of Venus, Vagueness and Vision: Vernon Lee and Eugene Lee-Hamilton, and the "spell of the fragment"', in *Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature*, (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 18, pp. 114-165.

⁹ George MacBeth, 'Lee-Hamilton and the Romantic Agony', *Critical Quarterly*, 4, 2 (June 1962), pp. 99-162 (p. 144).

¹⁰ Villari, p. 184

*All Kinds, As Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Sprit Hypochondriacal, and Hysterical Distempers, etc.*¹¹

Cheyne's work was one of the first to describe delights in advertising the sheer variety of somatic sources of the English Malady: a lack of 'spring and elasticity' in the nervous system,¹² and a deficiency of 'good condition'd Juices'.¹³ For Cheyne, the malady originated in the 'distinctive historical, social and cultural configurations of the English way of life', one of 'socio-economic achievement, opulence, sophistication, intellectual *éclat*, a glittering, competitive *beau monde*'.¹⁴ It is a disease affecting those in the higher socio-economic strata, the educated suffering from *ennui*. A fitting diagnosis for Eugene at the prime of his life in fashionable society in Paris. The term malady is also a nod to Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady, 1830-1980*; a study of hysteria, neurasthenia and shell-shock through the Victorian period and twentieth-century. Both Cheyne and Showalter contemplate a variety of nervous disorders and neuroses, yet neurasthenia as a diagnosis is absent from Cheyne's text. This is because neurasthenia was only being classified during the 1860s—it is the *beau monde* disorder after all—by American neurologist George Miller Beard (1839-1883). Beard's *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia): Its Symptoms, Nature, Sequences, Treatment* (1881) defines neurasthenia as a 'lack of nerve strength'.¹⁵ His aim is to:

[...] describe with thoroughness, if not exhaustively, the symptoms of neurasthenia – those hitherto assigned to the other affections, or regarded as special or distinct diseases themselves; to show their relations and interdependence; to distinguish them from the oftentimes closely resembling symptoms of organic disease on the one hand, and the symptoms of hysteria and hypochondria on the other hand; to unify and harmonize the complex developments and manifestations of this **malady**; to indicate its pathology and rationale, and trace out in detail its prognosis, sequences, treatment and hygiene [my emphasis].¹⁶

Despite Beard's attempts to differentiate between neurasthenia and other neurological conditions through a detailed study, he continues to utilize the term malady from Cheyne. Showalter suggests that sufferers of neurasthenia were 'co-operative [...] and well-bred', much unlike sufferers of its sister neurosis, hysteria.¹⁷ Per Beard, it was an 'acceptable'

¹¹ George Cheyne, *The English Malady: Or A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds, As Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirit, Hypochondriacal, and Hysterical Distempers, etc.* (London: G. Strahan in Cornhill & J. Leake at Bath, 1733), Frontispiece.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

¹⁵ George Miller Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia): Its Symptoms, Nature, Sequences, Treatment* (New York, NY: William Wood & Company, 1880), p. vi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii. My emphasis.

¹⁷ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 134.

and even ‘impressive’ disorder for men to acquire; although it must be noted that Beard himself was a sufferer.¹⁸ Whilst Lee did not bequeath a copy of Beard’s treatise on neurasthenia to the Harold Acton archive, she did leave a copy of Charles Féré’s *L’instinct Sexuel: évolution et dissolution*, published in 1899, as mentioned above in relation to Mary and Darmesteter. This copy of *L’instinct Sexuel* is annotated by Lee, and within, Féré directly references Beard’s 1880 text. Whilst Lee has not annotated this footnote, it is nevertheless the relevant chapter in which this reference occurs—‘Anomalies de l’instinct sexuel chez l’homme’—which has clear signs of reading, including cut pages and annotations.¹⁹ Moreover, Féré’s text explores *neurasthénie* and *neurasthénie sexuelle* on multiple occasions, it therefore seems likely Lee was aware of the concept of neurasthenia.²⁰ Féré describes the malady as thus:

Neurasthenia often reveals itself in disorders of sexuality; they are more common in men than in women. They mainly consist in an excessive excitability coinciding with impotence which is at first relative, though it is sometimes absolute, and is accompanied by various perversions. Mental pre-occupation of any kind whatever (e.g. intellectual work, emotions, etc.) may cause suppression of the sexual desire. It may be interrupted by representations which association has rendered inseparable from sexual excitement, such as a comical image [...] or a sense of violence.²¹

That Lee advocated Eugene working at his poetry—and the results thematically of that poetry as we shall soon discover—suggests that Lee was fully aware of the disorder (via Féré) and the subtleties of Eugene’s diagnosis.

The chronology of Eugene’s illness begins when he was employed by the British Diplomatic service in Paris. Eugene’s correspondence to his mother Matilda in the January and February of 1873 is concerned with an imminent change to his employment. He is to be moved from Paris to ‘Buenos Ayres’, a move to a role Eugene describes as one of the ‘worst posts in the world’.²² On January 26th, he tells Matilda if the service cannot secure him a position in Europe he will ‘get a certificate from a doctor saying his

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁹ Charles Féré, *L’instinct Sexuel: évolution et dissolution* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1899), Harold Acton Archive, VL 155.3 FER. Beard is mentioned directly on p. 106.

²⁰ Ibid., references to neurasthenia on p. 14, 95, 106, 130, 175, 195, 220, 230, 300 and 310. A high concentration of these references are located within the chapter ‘Anomalies of Parental Love in Man’, and ‘Anomalies of Sexual Instinct in Man’, the latter including a diagnosis of neurasthenia given by Dr. Hughlings Jackson.

²¹ Charles Féré, *The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct*, (Paris, Charles Carrington, 1904), p. 122-123.

²² Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Matilda Paget, January 26, 1873, Somerville College Archives.

health was bad, and necessitated immediate sick leave'.²³ By February 8, Eugene was 'laid up' with

[...] a pain in the ribs and upper-part of the arms, which Sir John Cormack tells me is irritation of the intercostal nerves caused by overwork [...] Cormack says I must absolutely go on leave at once.²⁴

Sir John Cormack was head of the Hertford British Hospital in Paris. His diagnosis suggested that the repetitive nature and stressful environment of Eugene's employment had led to the inflammation of the intercostal nerves in his shoulder and chest. This inflammation caused a contraction of the muscles in his arms and around his core, and furthermore, inhibited the transmission of sensory information from the skin. In March, Eugene appeared to make a slight recovery, and he was due to be transferred to Lisbon. Despite the minor improvements his mother was highly concerned. In a note at the bottom of Lee's letter to Eugene she laments:

My child I think it a most foolish idea of thine that of quitting Paris the moment thou be adequate [...] Thou who above all things just now require rest, *warmth* & physical & moral enlivenment [...].²⁵

Matilda's letter is written, rather unusually, in an eighteenth-century dialect, and according to her children and friends of the family, Matilda always spoke in this affected way. Lee writes in *The Handling of Words* '[s]he was [...] decidedly old-fashioned, as belonging to a West Indian family and brought up in a remote district in Wales. Thus she clung, even in the seventies, to certain eighteenth-century words and pronunciations', a fact that will become relevant below.²⁶

Villari writes in 'A Master of the Sonnet' that on Eugene's return to Florence in 1874 he was suffering with the 'most perilous case of cerebro-spinal disease' with 'all hope of recovery' gone.²⁷ The somatic shift from a localised arm and rib pain to a supposed infection of the cerebral fluid resulting in a paralysis of Eugene's lower limbs was a phenomenal alteration of prognosis within such a short space of time. What becomes evident is that despite a desire to save himself from an unwanted position in Buenos Ayres, Eugene's maladies manifested themselves physiologically, and he believed

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 21.

²⁵ Matilda Paget, to Eugene Lee-Hamilton, March 15, 1873, *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee, 1856-1935: The Pickering Masters Series*, Volume I, 1856-1884. ed. Amanda Gagel and Sophie Geoffroy (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 66-68.

²⁶ Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923), pp. 297-298.

²⁷ Villari, p. 184

in a physical causality, not a psychological origin at this stage. In the years that followed, Eugene transposed the time and energy previously engaged in service to focus on his newly emerging poetic career. He became transfixed with motifs of sleep, madness and paralysis, with his poetry focusing upon the limitations of the body and the fragility of mind and spirit. During the period 1882-1883 both Eugene and Vernon Lee draw on Eugene's physical and mental state as thematic inspiration for literary works.

Eugene's collection of poetry *The New Medusa* (1882) explores the genesis of paralysis and the noxa of traumatic sex and sexual contagion. Separated into two parts, 'Poems' and 'Sonnets'. In introducing the collection of poems, he draws the reader into his 'prison nurtured bed', and the claustrophobia of his 'cell'.²⁸ His physical paralysis is replicated within many pieces of his poetry, but this allows the narrator to transgress the mundane, falling into the macabre and the violent. The poems focus on murder, rape, pillage, and the sexual temptation of the religious figure. Eugene's narrators are set free to create and fantasise beyond the constraints of his own bodily limitations. They are concerned with historic events and ancient settings, going beyond his temporality and freeing the spatial restraints that bind him. 'The New Medusa' the title poem from his 1882 collection, is framed—similarly to 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'—as a dramatic monologue, a cathartic retelling of prior events. The mariner has returned to his homeland, to his 'Brother John', to the Hall of English Elms. The first stanza of the poem deals with the mariner's compulsion to tell his story: 'Yet must the tale be told, and every scene | Gone o'er again'.²⁹ The retelling of his story helps to assuage his torment: 'I fear some monstrous thing | From my own self, and on thy strength must lean'.³⁰ The revelation of the murder of his lovers to his Brother John is a relief; he is not concerned with punishment or retribution. He only fears 'some monstrous thing' which lurks within his own psyche; that of the mania and compulsion that ruined his life, and ended that of his lover. The compulsion to re-tell the psychological narrative, or the compulsion to withhold details from the psychological narrative has resonances with Eugene's own compulsion to tell and re-tell.

The narrator of 'The New Medusa' is a young mariner who, during a storm, discovers a beautiful woman lashed to the wrecked mast of a ship:

²⁸ Eugene Lee-Hamilton, 'Introduction' in *The New Medusa and Other Poems* (London: Eliot Stock, 1882).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

On closer search we found that it contained
 A Woman, **lashed** to remnants of a mast,
 Who seemed a corpse, but slowly, life regained.
 Her black, wet, rope-like locks she backward cast,
 And in her troubled memory seemed to seek;
 Then strangely, doggedly, concealed the past.
 Her garb, her features, said she was a Greek [my emphasis]³¹

The image of the shipwrecked woman bound to the fragmentary remains of her ship is utilized in Lee's fantastic tale 'Dionea'. Eugene's castaway is tied to the remains of a ship's mast, a broken phallic symbol, tossed-up on the foaming shoreline. The lashing of the girl to this wooden mast and the rope like-locks are suggestive of a sado-masochism. She is not given a voice by Eugene at this point, she is deciphered by her physiognomy and her garb: it is a measuring-up of her physical attributes. Lee appears to draw heavily on Eugene's poem:

She was **lashed** to a plank, swaddled up close in outlandish garments;
 and when they brought her to me they thought she must certainly be dead
 [...] when she came to, shook her head to show she understood no kind
 of Italian, and jabbered some half-intelligible Eastern jabber, a few Greek
 words embedded in I know not what [...] [my emphasis].³²

Yet whilst Lee's castaway is also lashed to a remnant of the ship she is swaddled, like a baby. She has a voice, and is understood as Greek by the narrator's educated guesses. In an obviously intertextual reference, Lee de-sexualizes Eugene's castaway, a very significant elision with her own personal sexual morals. If we are to consider Féré's pathology of neurasthenia as being correct, then one could argue that Eugene's symptoms are replicated copy-book style into his own poetry. Lee, on the other-hand, amalgamates her own sexual (non) experience with Eugene's narrative, in a blotting-book approach to the castaway theme. This works particularly well as both Lee and Eugene's sexual object is the same—a young woman—it is just their responses to that figure that differ immeasurably.

The mariner purchases the female castaway from an unscrupulous slave dealer, and the pair become lovers. The mariner's payment ensured that the young woman

³¹ Ibid., p. 15. My emphasis.

³² Vernon Lee, 'Dionea', in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, ed. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Toronto, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006), p. 78. My emphasis.

became a slave; 'a tame leopardess, | Docile, majestic, holding strength repressed'.³³ She saves his life from a 'malignant fever' with her art of 'mingling drugs' and knowledge of 'how to extract | From long-sought herbs a juice for ague's cure'.³⁴

One night, as the lovers—slave-owner and slave—lie side-by-side, the mariner dreams of writhing snakes that coil around his arms and neck, turning his body from flesh into stone. Upon waking in a breathless fright, he finds the silken strands of his lover's hair wrapped tightly around his upper limbs and neck. Before the week is out, the mariner has another terrible, petrifying dream, and he leaves his lover, promising never to return. Time passes, but he remains under the enchantment of his slave, and one evening returns to their bed-chamber whilst she lies asleep. Mad and fearful, he enters their room.

I was about to wake her, when the moon
Lit up the bed, and let me see a sight
Which for a while changed flesh and blood to stone.
All round the face, convulsed in sleep and white,
Innumerable snakes – some large and slow,
Some lithe and small – writhed bluish in the light,
[...]
Long stood I petrified; both limbs and mind³⁵

The paralysis of the speaker is entwined with the frustration of a sexual desire. What was once flesh and blood in the bedchamber is now turned to stone. As in Eugene's own malady, the frozen arm and chest wrapped with his lover's serpentine locks has spread throughout his body. The bedroom becomes a site for physical and mental petrification. The snakes surrounding his Gorgon's head tumble and writhe like Caravaggio's Medusa in the Uffizi (a gallery well known to both Lee and Eugene).³⁶ They twist and writhe like the sea-snakes plaguing the Ancient Mariner, yet unlike Coleridge's protagonist, the 'New Medusa's' narrator does not find them a blessing but a torment, albeit one he re-tells compulsively. It is only by decapitating his sleeping lover—a brutal act that heavily resonates with Freudian meaning—that the voice liberates himself from the madness and paralysis caused by a potent, yet passive female sexuality.

But, all at once, I felt a fire replace
My frozen blood, and unseen spirits seemed

³³ Lee-Hamilton, 'The New Medusa', in *The New Medusa* (London: Elliot Stock, 1882), pp. 12-28 (p. 16).

³⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³⁶ Eugene's poem 'On Leonardo's Head of Medusa' from *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* is in response to a painting held at the Uffizi. Diana Maltz's *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes 1870-1900: Beauty for the Poor* argues that Lee was one of the Toynbee Travellers' Club tour guides at the Uffizi in Florence! (pp. 81-82).

To call for an Avenger, and to brace
 My arm for one great blow. Above me gleamed
 A double-handed sword upon the wall,
 Whose weight, till then, beyond my strength I deemed.
 I seized it, swung it high, and let it fall
 Like thunder on the sleeping Gorgon's neck
 Before her eye could see or tongue could call.
 And, O my God! as if herself a snake
 Which, stricken of a sudden in its sleep,
 Coils up and writhes all round the injuring stake,
 She coiled about the weapon in a heap,
 But gave no sound, while all the sheet soaked red,
 Except a sort of gurgle hoarse and deep,
 Which made me strike again, until the head,
 Whose beauty death's convulsion seemed to spare,
 Rolled like a heavy ball from off the bed.
 I held the dripping trophy by the hair,
 Which now no more was snakes, but long black locks,
 And scanned the features with a haggard stare.
 And, like to one around whose spirit flocks
 Too great a crowd of thoughts for thought to act,
 I fled once more along the moonlit rocks.
 Then doubt, with his tormentors, came and racked.³⁷

Instead of the 'Medusa' turning Lee-Hamilton's narrator to stone, he becomes enflamed with an avenging passion. His weapon, the 'double-handed sword', enhances his masculinity, energizes his body: he swings the phallic object up above his sleeping lover and brings it crushing down on her neck repeatedly. The 'beauty's death convulsion' calls to mind the sculpture of the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini at the Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. The poet avenger stands above his lover echoing Bernini's angel with a spear, yet it is a sword he holds, and brings it down upon her neck.

The 'sheet soaked red' recalls the traditional airing of the wedding-night bed-linens which, when spotted with blood from the penetration and tearing of the virgin's hymen, are taken as a guarantee of sexual purity, and the sheer volume of blood which soaks the linens, and drips from the narrator's 'trophy' head, subconsciously suggests the purity of this Medusa. Yet, it is a problematic act: the murder provides the proof of his lover's innocence, but the mariner is tainted by the blood loss, which also echoes female menstruation. The murder of 'the gorgon' by the mariner has ended the life of a woman who exudes womanly fecundity and innocence most powerfully at the moment of death.

Whilst the narrator initially relishes the decapitation of the snake-headed woman, in the final four lines of the poem he suggests that the clarity with which he had chosen

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

to act is now lost. He has become suddenly ‘haggard’ and his mind ‘crowded’ with thoughts that halt rational action. His lover is not fixed in her nightmare form of the Medusa by death, she is returned to her human form. The snakes that crown the temples disappear, leaving only dripping ‘long black locks’: a return to the ‘black, wet, rope-like locks’ of the castaway. Once freed from his lover by her decapitation, he runs from the fragmented corpse along the moonlit coast. The concluding line: ‘Then Doubt, with his tormentors, came and racked’, suggests a hesitation between the possibility of a supernatural transformation of his lover into the Medusa, and a doubt that his actions may have been a psychological manifestation of fear of the sexual female. The symbolic power of the Medusa has endured through the death of the slave: she maintains her threat to man. Julia Kristeva’s Freudian readings of the decapitated head in figurative art touch briefly on the figure of Medusa. Kristeva notes the Medusa’s potential for both sexual potency (the Freudian Medusa as vulva, castrated and potent)³⁸ and innocence (she was raped by Poseidon); and death and fertility (in death Medusa gives birth to Pegasus and Chrysaor).³⁹ Kristeva’s reading of the Medusa echoes the paradox of Lee Hamilton’s new Medusa: she is at once ‘apparently castrated’ but still ‘she remains uncannily uncastrated’.⁴⁰

The importance of this image is that the motif of repeated periods of physical paralysis and psychological instability in ‘The New Medusa’ coincide with Eugene’s own (early) struggle with invalidity and melancholia. The framing device temporally locates the narrative’s murderous actions in a prior age, both in the given date of the re-telling—A.D. 1620—and the historical events retold. The narrator’s lover, ‘binding [the narrator] in chains that never weighed’ reuses/ retells the relationship using language Eugene uses to describe his own malady in the poetic ‘Introduction’:

The writer’s limbs and mind are laden both
By heavy chains.

Not by steel shackles, riveted by men,
But by the clankless shackles of disease;
Which Death’s own hand alone can sever, when
He so shall please.⁴¹

³⁸ Sigmund Freud, ‘Medusa’s Head’, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVIII (1920-1922), trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), pp. 273-274 (p. 274).

³⁹ Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head, Capital Visions*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴¹ Lee-Hamilton, ‘Introduction’, in *The New Medusa* (pp. 8-9).

Whilst the shackles of sexual mania that bind the mariner and his lover lack a physical weight, they are nevertheless powerful, and only severed by the murder of the 'Medusa'. Eugene's recognition that 'Death's own hand alone can sever' his physical disability suggests a recognition that he lacks control over his malady, over his symptoms. Yet the poet has the power to alter this destiny for the mariner. Through the decapitation of the sexual female figure the mariner is once more able to rid himself of his psychological mania. In Freudian terms, the beheading of the Medusa renders her impotent, the severing of head and body represents the castration of the potent phallus. Therefore, it would seem that Eugene's malady is subject to the influence of a female figure with whom he is bonded, and only through 'Death's own hand' may the malaise be eradicated. Whilst an initial reading of the stanza from Lee Hamilton's 'Introduction' seems to connote resigned fatality, perhaps the freedom from his 'clankless shackles of disease' are dependent not on his own mortality, but that of the potent, sexual female figure against which he struggles for his autonomy. Yet that the 'New Medusa' is so heavily entwined with Eugene's own mother is essentially problematic, and not just for prudish reasons. Eugene as Matilda's son bears the brunt of her capricious and unstable nature. As we have seen in Chapter II, the family taint of madness, the tempest in the blood, courses through both Matilda and Eugene, with Matilda being the source of Eugene's infection. Perhaps Eugene recognized his illness as stemming from his parent, and hoped that by taming her potency by cutting her head from her body (in 'The New Medusa') that his suffering must end. A poetical grandfather's paradox: in ending the life of your mother, you put an end to your own—hereditary—suffering. Through illuminating the parallels between my previous analysis of 'The New Medusa' and the following reading of Lee's *Ottilie*, I suggest that this figure of the potent female is that of Matilda Paget; Eugene Lee Hamilton's mother, and highlight the ways in which she becomes both an intertextual figure, and a disruptor of stratigraphical modes of heredity.

Ottilie

In 1883, Lee published *Ottilie: An Eighteenth Century Idyll*. The novella is, as Lee notes in the preface, a rendering of 'certain persons, living imaginary lives, in a quiet German town'.⁴² True to Lee's often duplicitous and playful phrasing, one is uncertain if those

⁴² Lee, *Ottilie*, p. 14.

‘certain persons’ are real individuals rendered imaginatively, or pure fiction. Christa Zorn suggests that *Ottolie*’s siblings Christoph and Otilie Reinhart are a fictionalized rendering of Eugene and Lee themselves.⁴³ Whilst I agree that Lee presents Christoph as a fictionalized rendering of Eugene, I would suggest that the devotion Christoph shows to the much older Otilie is in fact much more akin to the similarly devoted and complex relationship between Eugene and his mother Matilda, despite the fact that the story characterizes them as siblings. Like Eugene, who struggled with university life (at least in Lee’s eyes), Christoph, ‘poor, timid’ and ‘inexperienced’ struggled amongst the ‘vigorous’, ‘manly’, ‘excessively wild and undisciplined youths’.⁴⁴ His only solace is the post days and Otilie’s letters. After two years at the university, with the influence of his peers taking its toll, he found the only way to ‘fortify’ himself ‘against the prevalent malady’ was by ‘constant correspondence with [his] sister’.⁴⁵ Certainly Matilda’s own letters to her son show her awareness of his descent into melancholia, and her own suffering at his:

At the thought of thy being ill I am in an ague. Hast thou quinine pills with thee? If not, pray immediately desire a druggist to make up a scruple in 20 pills [...] For God’s sake, let thy bones, muscles, brains and spirits have all the help that Beef (and sleep sufficient) can afford.⁴⁶

These letters suggest a parallel between the Medusa figure in ‘The New Medusa’ and Matilda Paget. The poem’s lover cares for her master of a malignant fever: ‘In mingling drugs, and knew how to extract | From long-sought herbs a juice for ague’s cure’, similar to Matilda’s prescribing of ‘scruples’ and medications. As previously noted in Matilda’s letters to Eugene, the use of ‘ague’ in ‘The New Medusa’ suggests Eugene is rendering a heavily sexualized version of his mother in his poetry. Lee also knew her mother’s language to be archaic; and described her as an odd revenant from the eighteenth century. And whilst the ‘hast thou’ and ‘thys’ of Matilda’s letters are absent from Otilie’s dialogue within the text itself, in situating the novella overall in this period, she is again, gesturing at Matilda’s importance to the character of Otilie.

The idyll form is of course concerned with idealized pastoral landscape. It is no surprise then that Christoph’s psychological struggles occur during his time at university, and the court of the Prince – his move into urban centres. His return to nature, and to his sister, echo Eugene’s own return to Florence, i.e. not to the city, but to the Villa il

⁴³ Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Ohio, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 6.

⁴⁴ Lee, *Ottolie*, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁶ Gunn, p. 20.

Palmerino in the Tuscan hills, and the restorative effect this has. Furthermore, the narrative, framed by multiple layers of manuscript, is a textual separation between Lee the author, and the literary rendering of Eugene as Christoph, and Matilda as Otilie. Shafquat Towheed concurs. He writes that:

Lee presented the main story of the novella [...] by framing it with an anonymously written introduction that invoked the trope of the “found manuscript” thereby distancing herself from the inset tale through multiple levels of displacement (frame narrator/ editor, translation from German to English and from late eighteenth century to late nineteenth century) and once again drawing attention to her practice of deliberately blurring generic expectations.⁴⁷

This displacement also provides stratigraphical layers of time surrounding the narrative, providing a temporal and spatial distance between Lee, Eugene and Matilda, and Otilie and Christoph. But there exists the tether between the strata, the connection between Matilda’s linguistic affectation and the period setting. The central third of Lee’s narrative—framed as a ‘Confession’ written by Christoph—explores his descent into a ‘morbid state’, clearly echoing Eugene’s own malady and paralysis. Like Eugene, Christoph returns to Otilie after two years at university without completing his degree. Christoph writes of his peers:

Besides these dramatic authors, who went about in rags and swaggered over the atrocities they daily invented, there was a class of milder and better-conducted students, well born and delicately nurtured youths who were suffering from the fever of sentimentalism, lyric poets, imitators of Ossian and Klopstock. They were always weeping in verse, and ended by weeping in prose. After trying to make others believe they were the victims of some mysterious fate, and consumed by some unknown ill, they got to believe it themselves. Suicide was common among them, at least theoretically, and some of the poor creatures really ended in mad-houses. For a long-time I tried to steer clear of both categories, and to fortify myself against the prevalent malady by serious study and constant correspondence with my sister; but at length I too was carried along by the current.⁴⁸

Christoph recognizes the self-suggesting illnesses of some of his contemporaries—‘trying to make others believe it [...] they got to believe it themselves’—yet, like Eugene, he argues for the somatic causation of his morbid malady. He confesses ‘My melancholy was not, however, a pretence; far from it. It is possible to conceive the effect on a nervous

⁴⁷ Shafquat Towheed ‘Determining “Fluctuating Opinions”’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 60, 2 (September 2005), 199-236 (pp. 215-216).

⁴⁸ Lee, *Otilie*, pp. 123-124.

person of a long residence in a mental atmosphere with sickly sentiment'.⁴⁹ Christoph's illness is the unfortunate outcome of being surrounded by suicidal individuals, which manifested itself upon a nervous personality as a morbid physical disorder. He sacrifices the remainder of his university career—albeit with a new-found love of poetry—to make the long return home to Ottilie.

Back in his beloved Questenburg, Christoph falls in love with the young and beautiful Wilhelmine and becomes engaged. After a short search for work, Christoph is employed by a noble Prince to organize his library holdings at his often-deserted palace. The newly married couple move to the palace where they live as royalty—eating at the Prince's table and dining on his food. Wilhelmine is Christoph's temptress, suggesting they help themselves to their employer's fruits unbidden, as 'Prince L____ was none the poorer for it: such at least was Wilhelmine's argument—the argument, I have no doubt of Eve about the apple'.⁵⁰ Therefore in this period both Lee and Eugene focus on the deceptiveness of adoration and sexual attraction – Lee's Edenic temptress Wilhelmine and Eugene's serpentine 'The New Medusa'. Why is it then that a heterosexual relationship is portrayed as problematic within these works? Both *The New Medusa* and *Ottilie* are perhaps also informed by Eugene's infatuation with his cousin Pauline. Both Linda Villari's obituary for Eugene and Peter Gunn note this infatuation, and Pauline's subsequent spurning of Eugene for a French lover.⁵¹ There is no proof of a sexual encounter between the pair, or evidence—other than Villari's obituary—of any sexual encounter when in service, and perhaps this is where both Lee and Eugene 'render imaginatively' their protagonist's lives. Yet the Pauline incident, when taken together with Villari's loaded references to Eugene's Parisian excesses, is clearly significant. Eugene's final diagnosis of neurasthenia, and the clear preoccupations of the poetry, seem a useful analytical frame to see Eugene's malady might be through sexual frustration, and perhaps particularly—with coitus interruptus. As we have seen previously from the letters between Lee and Eugene concerning the relationship of Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter—the topic of coitus interruptus was one of interest to Eugene—his pathological obsession was with the possibility of a sex-life for Mary and James, one that avoided the possibility of children. And it must be noted that *The New Medusa* was dedicated to Mary, in 'friendship and admiration' and included the tumultuous poem 'A Letter to Miss A. Mary F. Robinson' which ends:

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

⁵¹ Villari, 'A Master of the Sonnet', and Gunn, p. 16

But I must stop; or else I shall defeat
My only object, to attract you here;
And at the thought that you perhaps may meet
A sudden watery end, you will retreat
Elsewhere in haste and fear.

Be not afraid; but simply brush away
The picture I have held before your eyes.
I told you once that you were like a ray
Of sunshine; and so long as sunshine stay
The river will not rise.⁵²

The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery

By 1887, Eugene's family had become concerned with the longevity and severity of his illness and so Lee decided to contact two specialists from the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London; Doctor Jonathan Hutchinson and Doctor John Hughlings Jackson (previously mentioned in Chapter I). Hutchinson was the president of the Neurological Society, and specialized in dealing with syphilitic patients, whilst Hughlings Jackson was famous in neurological circles for creating the conceptual framework for clinical neurophysiology—the discipline that underlies diagnostic neurology—and was also a specialist in treating epileptics.⁵³ Lee's initial meeting with Dr. Hutchinson at the neurological hospital was in early August 1887. In a letter to her mother, Matilda Paget, on August 5, she writes:

I have just come back from Dr. Jonathan Hutchinson. He is said to be the most eminent hospital doctor and nerve Dr., so before applying to Hughlings Jackson, who is the nerve doctor, I went to him. I told him all to the best of my memory, & he made a long note of E's case, in-order-to compare with other ones. He said he would see which he thought it would be worthwhile to talk it over with Hughlings Jackson. Anyhow, I am to see him again, on return to town, when Hughlings Jackson will be back.⁵⁴

Lee's meeting with Dr. Hutchinson was a consultation by proxy. She notes that she 'told him all to the best' of her 'memory', from wherein, Dr. Hutchinson suggested a diagnosis.

⁵² Eugene Lee-Hamilton, 'A Letter to Miss A. Mary F. Robinson' in *The New Medusa and Other Poems* (London: Eliot Stock, 1882), pp. 100-102 (p. 102).

⁵³ Herbert Hutchinson, *Jonathan Hutchinson, Life and Letters* (London: WM. Heinemann Medical Books Limited, 1946), pp. 33-38.

⁵⁴ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 5, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #312. Colby College Archives.

He says the disease is of a well-known type, and that he has had cases, not so bad. He says that in his opinion the vasomotor trouble is a result, not a cause, and he calls the malady one of nervous hyperesthesia. & he doesn't seem to me to think that anything at all radical is to be hoped. But that the worst symptoms may be mitigated & E thus be restored to comparative liberty of life.⁵⁵

From this early correspondence, Eugene's malady, that of nervous hyperesthesia [an excessive sensitivity of the skin brought about by a disorder of the nerves], is suggested to be the cause of his vasomotor issues, not *vice versa*. The increased sensitivity of the nervous system to sensual stimuli reported by Eugene, is Dr. Hutchinson thinks, symptomatic of the use of chemical stimulants:

He is very determined that E. must have had large doses of strychnine. Is this so? I mentioned the digitalin Potemski gave, but he insisted on the strychnine.

Lee was seventeen years old when Eugene's malady first reared itself, and prior to this period Eugene lived in Paris whilst the family remained in Italy. The visit to Dr. Hutchinson in 1887, fifteen years after the onset of Eugene's disease, produced problems for the proxy patient regarding a full history of symptoms. Lee's question to Matilda regarding the possibility of Eugene's using strychnine—'Is this so?'—suggests there are perfectly reasonable gaps in her knowledge regarding her half-brother. Lee had suggested to Dr. Hutchinson that perhaps the *digitalin* prescribed by the family's doctor in Florence may have produced a similar prognosis, but Hutchinson is adamant that strychnine is the cause. This poses a biographical question: was Lee unaware of Eugene's strychnine usage because this was a form of self-medication, rather than a physician's prescription? *The Complete Herbalist* explains that besides being a poison, it is a 'tonic' which is 'admirable remedy' for the 'want of nervous energy'.⁵⁶

Villari suggested that Eugene's 'fiery ambitions', 'reading hard and fast' and his 'participation in boyish pleasures' at Oxford were followed by that notion of his 'burning the candle at both ends'.⁵⁷ This physical and mental toil doubled in service, where he was 'terribly overworked', as well as having 'exciting experiences in both Paris and Tours'. Villari goes on to suggest that Eugene was equally focused on enjoying social as well as career success:

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ O. Phelps Brown, *The Complete Herbalist; or, The People Their Own Physicians* (London: O. Phelps Brown, 1879), pp. 128-129.

⁵⁷ Villari, p. 183.

What leisure indeed could he have for the niceties of versification during the strain and stress of that dreadful time in the beleaguered capital, with philanthropic work added to official duties? Or during the wild excess of the Paris scene?⁵⁸

With his heavy workload (plus philanthropic work added to his duties) and desire to live Paris life to the full (the ‘wild excesses’), we can perhaps understand if Eugene partook of nerve tonics.⁵⁹ But for Lee, an omission of this type—on purpose or as a forgotten attempt to cure—undermined the task she had given herself in trying to secure a diagnosis and treatment for her half-brother. In the same letter to Matilda (August 5, 1887) she demands:

I want E. to make out a list of all the principal drugs he has taken (with date & effect if any) also especially how & where applied. And I should like him to make out a careful history of this case, as perhaps my memory fails me, & an exact description of his present symptoms, where the head pains are, etc. In fact, give me all the information possible.⁶⁰

Lee’s desire for a full medical disclosure from Eugene is an acknowledgement of her inability to provide a full and frank history to her mother and the doctors of the onset and progress of his disease from his perspective. Lee’s memory has provided Dr. Hutchinson with detail enough for a diagnosis and treatment, but she evidently feels that it is sketchy at best. There is a sense that between the correspondence between Lee and her mother, Lee’s conversations with Eugene, and Lee with Eugene via letters to Matilda, that there is a withholding of information from all directions. As Lee presents the argument for medicating with bromides, as directed by Dr. Hutchinson, Lee interjects with her own use of the drug for palpitations:

He says he cannot say much else until E. have commenced the use of this bromide mixture, as that will be a test of the nature of the malady, bromide being the present nerve specific. He says it cannot possibly have a bad effect, & that E must continue for three weeks, and not mind if it produces depression & languor of spirits & shortenings of compassion. If the malady is functional hyperesthesia you see, such a combination of bromides must produce improvement; if it is a matter of the circulation, the bromide, on the contrary, will only produce its secondary results of [...] slight depression & making spots. You see he thinks E’s nerves are permanently in a state of unhealthy sensitiveness which the bromide will diminish. At all events, it may prove a valuable palliative in cases of bad fits. You know Sarah pretty-well cured me of palpitations with the small doses of bromide of potassium I have taken all winter. I hope E. will take

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 184.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 184.

⁶⁰ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 5, 1887. Colby College Archives.

the medicine as ordered, and not dilute it or otherwise render the experiment nugatory.⁶¹

Lee suggests that Eugene's probable reluctance to take the bromides would 'render the experiment nugatory'. Between these lines of the letter, in a much smaller, more delicate—and legible script—a unidentified writer notes: 'N. B. This is wrong. I know Bromide spots well. One large pimple here & there & generally on shoulders or neck'.⁶² Féré in *The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct* notes prescribing potassium bromide ('4 grammes [sic] every evening') to a male sufferer of genital hyperaesthesia and neurasthenia.⁶³ If Lee was not fully aware of the treatment and prognosis of Eugene's disorder during the early onset of the disorder, she most certainly would have been after reading Féré's comprehensive work.

By August 20, Lee's letter to Matilda states 'yesterday I sent off E's memorandum to Dr. Hutchinson, together in a letter in which I quoted E's remarks. I asked him to appoint a day to see me to arrange a consultation with Hughlings Jackson, who seems to be the real specialist. Perhaps he may suggest someone else, also'.⁶⁴ Lee's letter is hopeful for a consultation with the 'real' specialist, but she evidently feels that Eugene's memo—perhaps the list of treatments already attempted—will also be beneficial in finding a cure. What is perhaps strange is that Lee's letter to Dr. Hutchinson merely *quotes* Eugene's remarks. This suggests an editing process by Lee, on behalf of Eugene: there is no evidence of direct contact between Eugene and his doctors. It is an entirely mediated dialogue, with Lee as mediator.

On September 6, Lee met with both Hughlings Jackson and Hutchinson on Eugene's behalf, but left the consultation feeling mildly disappointed. Hughlings Jackson had failed to prescribe any new treatments for Eugene; he must simply continue to take bromide. Hughlings Jackson writes on the opening page of Lee's correspondence to her mother on September 6:

These remedies to be taken for a long time, six months or a year. If there is excess of hyper-aesthesia take the bromide two or three times a day. If on the other hand the nights are better and the hyper aesthesia less, then omit the bromide altogether or reduce the dose to half.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Féré, *The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct*, pp. 231-3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 231-3.

⁶⁵ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 6, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #324. Colby College Archives.

Below Hughlings Jackson's prescription on the letter Lee writes:

Tell Eugene... I went to W the chemist this morning... Alas! I saw at once the man was already nonplussed by the failure of the bromide and did not know what to prepare. I fear you will be very, very much disappointed – poor Eugene! I am less so for I never expected anything, nay rather dreaded some possible evil results. Dr. H[utchinson] is anxious E shd. try this other medicine, which is a strong nerve tonic, but he begs him to continue the bromides. Dr. H. confidently hopes that, without anything happening, E will grow out of the disease. He says it is a mistake to suppose that time of life doesn't affect men for the better like women. He says he knows sensual cases of nervous diseases being outgrown, apparently by a spontaneous regeneration of the organism.

Bromide was an unspecific treatment aimed at neutralizing hypersensitivity in patients, and used in the treatment of epilepsy, tertiary syphilis and hysteria. In a *Lancet* article discussing a meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society in London on Tuesday May 11, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Sir Charles Locock (1799-1875) states the efficacy of bromide as a treatment for sexual indulgence, masturbation and hysterical epilepsy, causing a reversible impotence.⁶⁶ This medication ties into what Lee writes as the 'sensual' nature of Eugene's disorder—and the possibility of the affected somatic organisms spontaneously regenerating. This idea, mooted by later biologists and physiologists, was the thesis of Henry Charleton Bastian (1837-1915), an evolutionary scientist and, importantly, a colleague of Hughlings Jackson and Hutchinson at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. Lee had a copy of Bastian's *Evolution and the Origin of Life* (1874) in her library. Bastian's work questioned the single origin teleology of evolutionary science, and instead posited the multiple spontaneous generation of lifeforms – or Archebiosis.⁶⁷ It appears to have been very likely that it was Lee's research into this work that directed her towards Bastian's colleagues and the hospital for a cure.

That Eugene's disorder was sensual would have no-doubt been inherently difficult for Lee. As we can infer from Lee's treatment of Mary and Darmesteter (in Chapter V) Lee would have been troubled by the implied issues of sexual incontinence and morality in Eugene's diagnosis and his subsequent medical treatment. Lee's previous reading—Clapperton, Besant—and her feelings regarding Mary and Darmesteter have repercussions (become a kind of intertext) in Lee's dealing with Eugene.

⁶⁶ A. R. Oarrod, 'Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society Meeting – Tuesday November 24, 1857', *The Lancet*, 2, 1788 (December 5, 1857) 577-79.

⁶⁷ Henry Charleton Bastian, *Evolution and the Origin of Life* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), pp. 13-14. Harold Acton Archive, VL 576.83 BAS.

On September 14, 1887 Lee wrote to Matilda with confirmation of Eugene's prognosis from the London doctors; they 'think Eugene has a nervous, rather than a vaso-motor malady'.⁶⁸ This suggests that there has been physical damage to either Eugene's peripheral or central nervous system, resulting in his paralysis. In this instance, perhaps, Hutchinson's suggestion of the 'spontaneous regeneration' of the organism, of a 'sensual case' is rather less exotically a case of sensory rather than sexual physiology (either too sensitive, or un-sensing). Yet, throughout the period 1887-89 there was little improvement for Eugene, despite his continued use of bromides.

Neurasthenia and Auto-Suggestibility

During the summer of 1889 Lee read Charles Fèrè (1852-1907) and Alfred Binet's (1857-1911) *Animal Magnetism* (1888), a book that studied the influence and application of Mesmerism. Anthony Mesmer utilised magnets to manipulate an individual's 'subtle fluid' or animal magnetism, and in doing so, could cure certain ills.⁶⁹ Binet and Féré's work discusses Mesmer's treatment of hysteria as an auto-suggestive disorder due to hysteria being 'a general condition of hypnotic effects', and therefore susceptible to treatment via Mesmerism and hypnotism.⁷⁰ Mesmerism, once a physically-based hypothesis became transformed in the latter-half of the nineteenth century to a psychologically-based one. The key figure in this transformation was James Braid, and his work influenced the work of early nineteenth century monk Abbé Faria, who like Braid, utilized the power of suggestion. It is this 'Oriental hypnosis' or suggestive trance. In a letter home on September 26, 1889, Lee suggests to Matilda that Eugene's disorder may be hysteria, and that she will arrange to meet with specialists in Paris. This shift from the diagnosis of a physical disorder, to Lee's sense that Eugene's persistent malady was psychological—an illness due to 'imagination'—was incredibly important for Eugene and his subsequent recovery.

During her time in Paris, Lee visited the physician and acclaimed hypnotist Dr Jules-Bernard Luys (1828-1897). Luys was the head of La Charité, and had also worked at Salpêtrière hospital. Luys' work *The Brain and Its Functions* was advertised in the front

⁶⁸ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, September 14, 1887, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #327. Colby College Archives.

⁶⁹ Alfred Binet and Charles Féré, *Animal Magnetism* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 79. Lavater was also a well-known magnetizer, as well as physiognomer.

covers of *Animal Magnetism* as part of the *International Science Series*. On October 8, 1888 Lee wrote a postcard to her mother explaining she will try to meet with Dr. Luys in Paris.

Of course, I will try to see Dr. Luys and his machine. But how after Kit's letter can E. imagine that any hypnotic experiment can or ought to be made without a Dr.⁷¹

It appears that both Kit and Lee have a much better working knowledge of hypnotism and using suggestibility as a treatment than Eugene. On October 12, 1889 Lee writes to Matilda that Luys has agreed to show her his hypnotism machine but states he has never heard of a case quite like Eugene's! He suggests treatment by his Mirror Rotatif, a mirror that rapidly revolves around a central stand, which is especially effective on neurasthenic sufferers: Luys suggests neurasthenia is 'more amenable' to hypnosis than any other form of nervous disease. Luys suggests Lee consults with his associate, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), who confirms his diagnosis of neurasthenia. Charcot suggests: 'Everything considered, I think the affliction comes under the category of cerebro-spinal neurasthenia, with peculiarities, however, which makes it different from the common type'.⁷² In a partial acceptance of Charcot's diagnosis, Eugene states 'It's morbid, it's awful, but it isn't vulgar'.⁷³



Figure 1, Dr Luy's Mirror Rotatif, or the Larks Mirror.

⁷¹ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, October 8, 1888, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #478. Colby College Archives (Kit's letter is missing).

⁷² Gunn, p. 22.

⁷³ Gunn, p. 22.

Charcot's work on hysteria and neurasthenia was influential, most notably on his student Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who was particularly interested in the treatment of hysterics with hypnotism. Freud's paper 'A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism' (1893) relates a typical case of neurasthenia: 'starting originally with a good constitution, the patient is haunted by the usual sexual difficulties at puberty; there follows years of overwork as a student, preparation for examinations'. Then, in working life, after a sexual encounter, depression grows and so does the incapacity for work. The patient then 'grows increasingly self-centred and his character more restricted, till he becomes a torment to his family'.⁷⁴ This temporally stratified build-up of psychological issues and neuroses, layer-upon-layer, in the patient's unconscious create physical problems. For Freud, the treatment by hypnosis is a way of excavating through these psychological layers to remove the somatic symptoms. Eugene's psyche, and his letters to Lee, became the copy-book for his social and sexual issues. The work of the hypnotist requires an excavation back through the layers, to uncover the site/s causing the problem.

In Eugene's dictated letters to Lee he does little but complain of his illness, and on January 27 he signs off his letter 'Hell is the vision of a soul on fire, E'.⁷⁵ Freud's reference to overwork has resonance with Eugene's short period at university and in the diplomatic service: burning the candle at both ends. It is impossible to produce evidence pertaining to actual sexual difficulties or a specific sexual encounter, which Freud suggests are an aspect of the development of the illness. Whilst we might speculate on Eugene's spurned affection for Pauline, or even to Lee's partner Mary Robinson, what we do know for certain is that sexual frustration, and coitus interruptus was a huge part of Eugene's imaginative life.

By October of that year Eugene's torture is lessened not by the reduction of his symptoms, but by the modification of his wheeled bed to include a 'fur bag' in which to secure his legs. This has 'put an end for good to the constant torture' from cold and discomfort Eugene was in, and on a more aesthetic concern 'greatly diminished the external deformity of my sofa'. The paralysis of his body echoes that of other patients of Dr. Hughlings Jackson. Jackson's case notes, held in the archives at the Queens Park

⁷⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism', in *Pre-Psychoanalytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts; The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume I (1886-1899), trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), pp. 115-128 (p. 118).

⁷⁵ Eugene Lee Hamilton, to Vernon Lee, January 27, 1890, Somerville College Archives. Lee's letter to Matilda on the same day questions: 'E. got over the relapse at all?' Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, January 27, 1890, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #488. Colby College Archives.

Neurological Hospital archives, are instructive. While Jackson's specific notes for Eugene himself appear not to have survived, clues can be gained by piecing together Eugene's symptoms and diagnosis through the related notes for three other patients: Corneby Acton, A. C. Richardson, and Ruth Bick. All three patients suffered from neurasthenia and paralysis, yet during neurological tests the paralysis was not due to nerve damage but to psycho-somatic causes—all could process sensory information, albeit not consistently.⁷⁶ The removal of the leather straps which previously secured Eugene's legs, and their replacement with a 'fur bag' suggests that despite a functional paralysis, Eugene was still able to sense discomfort and temperature. Like Eugene, A. C. Richardson's notes also include a prescription for bromide.

At the start of August 1892 Lee spent time in London with Kit Anstruther Thomson. During this time both women visited the International Congress of Experimental Science. On August 2, Lee writes to Matilda:

Been twice to Psychological Congress. Helmholtz was there, Sully, Bain, Galton, etc. Also (as listener) Stanley, strange, impassive like a Roman Emperor, not a 19th century mortal. Most interesting hypnotic experiment by Dr. Bramwell. Remarkable new lights on suggestion in functional diseases. Going again tomorrow to see more. Liébeault, Charcot's rival there also.⁷⁷

Many of the speakers at the conference, like Freud, were interested in reaching the subconscious strata of human intelligence, and it was suggested that hypnotism was the principal means.⁷⁸ On August 5, Lee continues:

I went again to the psychological congress & saw some more most curious experiments of suggestion. This might suggest points to E, so I will treasure them. Also much interested in the new developments of the nervous diseases & hyperaesthetic states. For instance, possibility of storing up impressions and suggestions received in a morbid condition to act on him long after in a non-morbid state.⁷⁹

This postcard to her mother reveals Lee's cognizance that Eugene's illness is indeed auto-suggestive. All she needed was confirmation from a physician to convince her brother of the fact and to alter treatment accordingly. Lee recognizes from these experiments in suggestion—a form of hypnotism—a parallel between the storage of morbid impressions

⁷⁶ Dr. John Hughlings Jackson, case notes: NHNN/CN/8/7, NHNN/CN/8/5, NHNN/CN/8/6, Courtesy of Queen's Park Hospital Neurological Archives

⁷⁷ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 2, 1892, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #644. Colby College Archives.

⁷⁸ Arthur Macdonald, 'The International Congress of Experimental Psychology, Held in London, August 1892', *Science*, 20, 511 (November 1892), 288-290 (p. 289).

⁷⁹ Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget, August 5, 1892, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #645. Colby College Archives.

and stratigraphic remains. To assist in Eugene's recovery, the impressions causing the nervous state must be uncovered.

In 1893 Eugene engaged a Dr. William Heinrich Erb, a neurologist practising in Germany. He was a colleague of Beard, and Beard's text on neurasthenia was dedicated to Erb, the man who 'helped make an era in neurological science'.⁸⁰ Erb supports Charcot's summation, and Lee's letter to Matilda on February 6 suggests that Erb stated that 'the malady is a purely functional one, produced by a high-degree of auto-suggestion', and that furthermore Eugene will not be any the worse for a relapse. The recognition of a subconscious element to Eugene's disorder seems to have been one of the keys to Eugene's cure. According to Erb, in accepting that his illness is self-induced, albeit now unconscious, Eugene should be able to confront the noxa, and induce a recovery.

During this period of willingness to recover, Eugene's poetry visualizes his body outside the physical constraints consequent on his condition. His 1894 publication *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* includes the poem 'To My Wheeled Bed'.

Hybrid of rack and of Procrustes' bed,
Thou thing of wood, of leather, and of steel,
Round which, by day and night, at head and heel,
Crouch shadowy Tormentors, dumb and dread;

Round which the wingless Hours, with feet of lead
For ever crawl, in spite of fierce appeal,
And the dark Terrors dance their silent reel;
What will they do with thee when I am dead?

Lest men should ask, who find thee stowed away
In some old lumber room, what wretch was he
Who used so strange an engine night and day

Fain would I have thee shivered utterly;
For, please the Fates, no other son of clay
Will ever need so dire a bed as thee.⁸¹

This sonnet, in the Italian style, is an ode to the protective force of his mechanized bed at Via il Palmerino. It is not the 'hybrid of rack and of Procrustes' bed' that torments the poet, but the crouching 'shadowy tormentors', the dancing 'Terrors' and wingless 'Hours'. The opening line of 'rack'—that tortuous device—and 'Procrustes' bed' (in Greek myth it is Procrustes who forced men to lay on his iron bed, and to make them conform to its shape Procrustes violently mutilated their bodies) suggests the poetic

⁸⁰ Beard, dedication.

⁸¹ Eugene Lee-Hamilton, 'To My Wheeled Bed' *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* (Portland, ME: Thomas B. Mosher, 1894), p. 19.

voice's lack of affinity with the psychical realm: the bed is loved for all its hard and mechanistic surfaces. It is the psychological torture that plagues the poet. The sonnet's volta propels the reader into a future long preceding the death of the poet, to the 'lumber room' where the 'strange engine' of Eugene's bed is stowed. In Slavoj Žižek's study of Hegel, *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek considers the tortuous nature of language itself, a nature to due to language holding the vicissitudes of the libido. Žižek suggests an affinity between Procrustes' arbitrary desire for the human form to fit the shape of his iron bed, and that of the poet's desire for the poetic voice to adopt the conformed standards of the sonnet form:

Language must be twisted, denaturalized, extended, condensed, cut, and reunited, made to work against itself. Language as 'big Other' is not an agent of wisdom to whose message we should attune ourselves but a medium of cruel indifference and stupidity. The most elementary form of torturing one's language is called poetry – think of what a complex form like a sonnet does to language: it forces the free flow of speech into a Procrustean bed of fixed forms of rhythm and rhyme.⁸²

Eugene pre-empts and exemplifies Žižek's ideas here, by utilising the structure of the sonnet on a subconscious level—rather like his bed—to support his flights of psychological fancy, whilst also linguistically restraining and forcing those ideas to conform.⁸³

Lee writes once again to her mother regarding Eugene's illness on November 9-10, 1894. She recognizes that Eugene now admits his illness is caused by auto-suggestion, but that he will do nothing about it. Echoing Freud's analysis of the neurasthenic who 'grows increasingly self-centred' until 'he becomes a torment to his family'.⁸⁴ Eugene's correspondence during this period is, as author of 'A Publishing History of the Writings of Eugene Lee-Hamilton' Harvey T. Lyon writes, full of thoughts of himself, which tended to make Lee irate. Lyon suggests only after the death of his hated step-father' was Eugene able to affect his own recovery, once more via auto-suggestion,⁸⁵ perhaps a signal that his mother's horizon also needed to be completely filled by Eugene too, in order for

⁸² Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 871.

⁸³ This allusion to Procrustes' bed may also be foreshadowed by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*. Thought 499 explains "'Thinking" in a primitive (inorganic) state is to *preserve in forms*, as in the case of the crystal. – In *our* thought, the *essential factor* is the harmonising of the new material with the old schemes (Procrustes' bed), the *assimilation* of the unfamiliar. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Vol. XV: The Will to Power Books Three and Four* ed. Dr. Oscar Levy, trans Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh & London: T. N. Foulis, 1910), p. 22.

⁸⁴ Freud, 'Psychotherapy of Hysteria', p. 118.

⁸⁵ Lyon, p. 141.

him to recover. In August 1895 Eugene declared himself well enough to travel, and set off to Andorno. This trip lasted twenty-four hours and he returned home refusing to ever leave again. Lee writes to Kit Anstruther Thomson of her brother's return—and relapse—‘Good Lord I shall always have him on my hands?’ She writes that having gotten his own way Eugene ‘seemed very cheerful [...] I feel dazed and idiotic’.⁸⁶ But this was only a small setback, and he managed to regain his health enough to nurse his mother during her long illness.⁸⁷ Linda Villari's obituary also differs dramatically with Peter Gunn on this crucial point. Villari's Eugene is a source of comfort to his mother, whilst Gunn's Eugene ‘barely noticed his mother's decline’.⁸⁸ Both writers concur that the moment Eugene stepped into Palmerino after his mother's funeral, he stated his intention to leave the villa, and the care of his younger sister.

During 1896 he visited Europe, America and Canada, travelling much further in the short, illness-free years than Lee did in her lifetime. He also met the novelist Annie E. Holdsworth (1860-1917), whom he married on July 9, 1898.⁸⁹ Whilst Lee approved of his betrothal, she was concerned about the communication of psychological infirmity to any children the couple may have. As already highlighted, Lee's letter to Kit exclaims that ‘E. has no right to have children’ despite the fact he considers himself sound and fully recovered.⁹⁰ This letter bears a striking resemblance to the letter between Lee and her mother during the period of Mary's engagement to Darmesteter, in which she was concerned the couple must remain childless. There are echoes between the concept of the transmissibility: for Mary, Darmesteter's disability, and for Eugene's neurasthenia. The inheritance of neurasthenia is a focus for both Charcot and Freud who emphasised the heritability of the disease. Likewise, the case notes of Hughlings Jackson and Hutchinson almost always begin with a family history. Eugene and Annie failed to listen to Lee or the specialists, and Eugene's daughter Persis was born in 1903. However, the baby died in 1904, without having met her aunt Violet/ Vernon.

During 1899, Lee read a second work by the French physician Charles Féré: *L'instinct Sexuel: Evolution et Dissolution*. Lee's copy of the text is also held by the Harold

⁸⁶ Vernon Lee, to Clementina Anstruther Thomson, August 6, 1895, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #786. Colby College Archives.

⁸⁷ Villari, p. 184.

⁸⁸ Gunn, p. 164.

⁸⁹ Annie Holdsworth, rather like her sister-in-law, was of Anglo-Caribbean descent and wrote fiction under a pseudonym, Max Beresford.

⁹⁰ Vernon Lee, to Kit Anstruther Thomson, December 13, 1902, Vernon Lee Letters Home, #836. Colby College Archives.

Acton, and sections of the text have been marked in the margins with pencil. Lee was particularly taken with the distillation of W. Hammond's ideas on hysteria:

A mon avis, dit-il, la disposition plus marquée des filles à l'hystérie ne tient ni à ce que leur instinct genital n'est pas satisfait, ni à l'inactivité des organes génitaux; cette névrose doit être plutôt attribuée à ce qu'il manqué un véritable but à ces femmes et à ce qu'elles rapportent constamment toutes leurs réflexions, tout leurs pensées, tous leurs sensations à leur moi.⁹¹

It is a neurosis that is not only a sexual disorder, but a disorder of a pre-occupation with the self. Its sufferers have no aim and all thoughts and reflections are concerned only with themselves. He continues, explaining that it is not a pure mental illness but also 'd'une maladie somatique' – the neurosis has some physical stigmata.

Lee's annotations of Féré's are concentrated on areas of degeneracy and atavism (it is important to note that the chapter 'Les Perversions Sexuelles' which explores same-sex relationships and sexual inversion is uncut, unlike the remainder of the text). As noted in Chapter IV, Lee marks a significant extract on atavism occurring due to malnutrition, but directly before this, Féré is concerned with problems with the evolution of sexual instincts, which is borne by a disorder in development. This can then be passed onto offspring through a neo-Lamarckian mode of inheritance. What is of more concern, is that '[w]hen atavism appears in any given individual [...] it shows itself in characters lacking in the immediate parents of the individual, but which are actually possessed by being which may be considered to be among its ancestors'.⁹² Not only should Lee be concerned regarding Eugene's organic memory, but also that of his ancestors, the slave owning Adams family.

Binet and Féré's work discusses a variety of neuroses and their treatment using the latest techniques of magnetism and hypnotism, and it supports Freud and Charcot's earlier investigation into the source of sexual noxa of neurasthenia. Fère states the disease is characterized by 'an excessive excitability coinciding with an impotence [...] and is accompanied by sexual perversions'.⁹³ And reiterating Freud and Charcot, he stipulates without uncertainty on the heritability of the disorder. This suggests that Lee's

⁹¹ Fère and Binet, *L'instinct Sexuel*, p. 27. Harold Acton Archive, VL 155.3 FER. 'Hammond pronounces an opinion concerning hysteria which he suggests may be applied to other conditions. He specifically says that in his judgement, the disposition to hysteria – which is more marked against young women than young men – has nothing to do with either the fact that their genital instinct is not satisfied, or that their genital organs are inactive. This state of neurosis should rather be ascribed to the fact that some women have no real aim or ambition in life, and that their reflections, thoughts and feelings are centred on themselves.' [my translation].

⁹² Ibid., p. 35.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 122.

disgruntlement at Eugene and Annie's pregnancy, and the intellectual form it took, was demonstrably informed by her reading on the subject matter.

Eugene's refusal to acknowledge a psychological origin for his malady reveals some of the evolving cultural and social perceptions of neurosis in the late-Victorian period, especially for men, and the changes that came with the rise to celebrity of Charcot, Luys and Binet, and the subsequent acceptance of Beard's idea of neurasthenia. Whilst madness and romantic renderings of mental illness crept into Eugene's poetry, it is Lee's mediation that eventually assisted a diagnosis and recovery for her brother. In becoming the mediator between doctor and patient, Lee surpasses the repression of the pathogenic memory—whatever that memory may have been—by enabling the doctor direct access to this moment, and therefore theoretically enabling the removal of the somatic symptom. It is what Freud and Breuer termed catharsis, 'the process of reducing or eliminating a complex by recalling it to conscious awareness and allowing it to be expressed'. What is problematic in this three-way relationship between physician, Lee and Eugene, is that the abreaction—the repressed emotion—is unable to be released without direct contact between the doctor and the patient. Lee becomes a physical form of resistance, rather than a personal psychological resistance put up by the analysand. Any form of catharsis Eugene would have in releasing the content of his unconscious with an analyst is negated by Lee's mediating presence.

The Minotaur

The inheritability of psychological illness was certainly considered by Lee to be a factor in Eugene's neurosis. Her interest in the transmission of mania and ancestral memory through the strata of the generations are a primary focus for her, yet the relation between inheritance and environment continued to fascinate. Many of the troubled male characters in Lee's fiction are subject to maladies that occur after they are separated from, or returned to, an overbearing mother figure. This certainly confirms what Harvey T. Lyon's bibliography of Eugene's work proclaims to be 'a textbook version of the Oedipus complex'.⁹⁴ This seems unconvincing perhaps, due to Eugene's father, Captain Lee-Hamilton dying in 1852 before the birth of Lee. Lee's first literary exploration of a Eugenesque character's intense fascination for a motherly figure is the characterization of Otilie and Rheinhart (1883), before she then returns to this relationship in the 1903

⁹⁴ Lyon, p. 15.

play, 'Ariadne in Mantua', which featured in the collection *Limbo and Other Essays*. Vineta Colby notes had a 'brief production' in 1916 in London with music by Eugene Goossens and Ivor Novello, as well as a production in Italy (performed by friends) in 1934.⁹⁵

'Ariadne in Mantua' has at its heart the character of Diego, or as 'he' is revealed to be, Magdalen. Magdalen is a Greek courtesan 'of some experience and of more than usual tact',⁹⁶ who fell in love with a young Duke of Mantua whilst he was held captive in her home land. She enraptures the young man with her singing, but he is freed and returns to Italy. On his arrival home to Mantua, the young Duke is plagued with a melancholy malady, and his mother, the Duchess, hopes desperately for a cure. A young courtier called Diego—Magdalen in disguise—attends the court of the Duke offering his services as a musician. Yet the Cardinal is quick to recognize the courtesan in Diego, but despite this, hopes the young woman will cure the young Duke of his torpor, to 'bring him under the control of reason and duty'.⁹⁷ It is this service as a musician that assists the young Duke in his recovery, and suggests his engagement to well-bred Hippolyte. Despite her/his active role in the Duke's betrothal, Diego is distraught, and writes a masque based on the myth of Ariadne to be performed at the wedding feast. Diego plays Ariadne, who sings the finale: a song known to the Duke as the song of Magdalen the courtesan. As the Duke's memory is triggered by the melody of his lover, Diego/ Magdalen/ Ariadne reaches the crescendo of the piece and dives into the nearby lake. The crowd are besotted with the performance, yet the Duke at first petrified by the song, then recognizes something was amiss with the finale. He rushes towards the lake, and pulls up the body of Magdalen. By her suicide, Magdalen has freed the Duke from his melancholy, and allowed him to do his duty and be a husband to Hippolyte.

The drama is obviously influenced by *Twelfth Night*, and Vineta Colby has argued that Lee is herself the inspiration for the cross-dressing Diego, with Kit Anstruther Thomson as the boyish Hippolyte.⁹⁸ But as Colby herself notes (as does Lee in her preface to the play), the crescendo of Ariadne's performance is one of the 'Tuscan inspired lyrics from Mary Robinson's *An Italian Garden*', with the drama being dedicated to Mary (or Mrs. Emile Duclaux as she was known during this period).⁹⁹ Mary's *An Italian*

⁹⁵ Colby, p. 269.

⁹⁶ Vernon Lee, 'Ariadne in Mantua', in *Limbo and Other Essays to Which is now added Ariadne in Mantua* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908), pp. 215-293 (p. 228).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁹⁸ Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, MA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), p. 269.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

Garden: A Book of Songs, was a collection of lyric poetry that *Athenaeum* suggested spent ‘too long in vagueness and dreaming and sweetly told conceits’.¹⁰⁰

It is perhaps most symbolic that ‘Ariadne in Mantua’ was published the year following Eugene’s recovery and the death of his mother Matilda. It is also the death of a woman—Magdalen—in ‘Ariadne in Mantua’ that eventually frees the Duke from his malady. Yet, in this instance, it is the sacrifice of Diego that restores the young Duke to his ‘reason and duty’: returning to his mother and to ensuring the heredity of the Ducal line. With this sacrifice in mind, the synergies between Lee and Diego appear most natural to the reader.

Whilst Diego is alive the Duke’s recovery is only partial. He/she is cognizant of this fact and his/ her discussion with The Duchess in Act II perhaps alludes to this issue of clarity and recovery.

DIEGO: Your Grace will understand the matter as much as I can; and I cannot. He does not recognize me, madam.

DUCHESS: Not recognize you? What do you mean?

DIEGO: What the words signify: Not recognize.

DUCHESS: Then – he does not know – he still believes you to be – a stranger?

DIEGO: So it seems, madam.

DUCHESS: And yet you have cured his melancholy by your presence. And in the past – tell me; had you ever sung to him?

DIEGO: (weeping silently). Daily, madam.

DUCHESS: (slowly). They say that Ferdinand is, thanks to you, once more in full possession of his mind. It cannot be. Something still lacks; he is not fully cured.

DIEGO: Alas, he is. The Duke remembers everything, save me.¹⁰¹

The problem of Duke Ferdinand’s malady, whilst being worked through by Diego, is not fully resolved. The Duke lacks the full recognition that Diego is Magdalen the courtesan. But this knowledge must not be forced upon the desolate Duke, as the Cardinal notes ‘the situation is delicate [...] dangerous as well as difficult’. He continues ‘For all his gloomy apathy, my nephew is quick to suspicion, and extremely subtle. He will delight in flouting us’.¹⁰² The Duke appears delighted to put a halt to his recovery; he revels in the ongoing malady. As we have considered earlier, this self-occupation is symptomatic of Binet and Féré’s diagnosis of neurasthenia, and echoes the way in which Lee believed that Eugene had delayed his personal recovery. Here, we can detect the blottings of Eugene’s plot, in Lee’s narrative.

¹⁰⁰ Anon. ‘Review of A. Mary F. Robinson’, *Athenaeum* (April 17, 1886), p. 517.

¹⁰¹ Lee, ‘Ariadne in Mantua’, pp. 245-46.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, pp. 228-29.

Act III begins with a solemn conversation between the young Duke and Diego, with the Duke revealing the meaning of the labyrinth upon his ceiling:

DUKE. Thou asked me once, dear Diego, the meaning of that labyrinth which I have carved, a shapeless pattern enough, but well suited to blue and gold, upon the ceiling of my new music-room. And woudst have asked, I fancy, as many have done, the hidden meaning of the device surrounding it – I left thee in the dark, dear lad, and treated thy curiosity in a peevish manner. Thou hast forgiven and perhaps forgotten, deeming my lack of courtesy but another ailment of thy poor sick master; another of those odd and ungracious moods which, kindest of healing creatures, thou hast had such wise and cheerful patience. I have often wished to tell you but I could not, 'tis only now in some mysterious fashion, I seem myself once more – able to do my judgements bidding, and to dispose, in memory and words, of my own past. My strange sickness, which thou hast cured, melting its mists away with thy beneficent music even as the sun penetrates and sucks away the fogs of dawn from our lakes – my sickness, Diego, the sufferings of my flight from Barbary; the horror, perhaps, of that shipwreck which cast me (so they say for I remember nothing) senseless on the Illyrian coast – these things, or Heaven's judgement on but a lukewarm crusader, had somehow played strange havoc with my will and recollections. I could not think, or thinking, not speak; or recollecting, feel that he whom I thought of in the past was this same man myself.

But now, and thanks to thee, Diego, I am another; I am myself.

The dialogue continues:

DIEGO. And now, dear master, you recollect all?

DUKE. Recollect, sweet friend, and tell thee. For it is seemly that I should break through this churlish silence with thee. Thou didst cure the weltering distress of my poor darkened mind; I would have thee, now, know somewhat of the past of thy grateful patient. The maze, Diego, carved and gilded on that ceiling is but a symbol of my former life; and the device which, being interpreted, means "I seek straight ways," the expression of my wish and duty.

DIEGO. You loathed the maze, my Lord?

DUKE. Not so, I loved it then. And I still love it now. But I have issued from it – issued to recognize that the maze was good. Though it is good, I left it. When I entered it, I was a raw youth, although in years a man; full of easy theory, and thinking all practice simple; unconscious of passion, ready to govern the world with a few learned notions; moreover, never knowing either happiness or grief, never loved and wondered at a creature different from myself; acquainted not with the straight roads which I now seek, but only with the rectangular walls of schoolrooms. The maze, and all the maze implied, made me a man.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 248-54.

The labyrinth stands as a reminder of the obfuscation of the Duke's memory, and therefore of his courtesan love once back in Mantua. That the labyrinth is painted on the ceiling of his music room suggests an unconscious connection between his malady and the missing song of his lover. But even though the Duke is partially cured he is still not the 'same man' as before his encounter with Magdalen. In explaining the motif of the maze on his ceiling, the Duke expresses his prior difficulty: 'I have often wished to tell thee but I could not, 'tis only now in some mysterious fashion, I seem myself once more – able to do my judgements bidding, and to dispose, in memory and words, of my own past.'¹⁰⁴ The Duke—at some point after his release from the Infidels—lost, or repressed his trauma. The relationship between Diego and the Duke has echoed the relationship between the analysis and analysed in the free association technique. The suspicion of this technique by the Duke has parallels with the resistance expected from the patient of Freudian psychoanalysis, yet the Duke's repressed memories resurface, and he is at once able to 'dispose' of the 'memory' of his 'own past'. In partially ridding himself of these unconscious desires and 'seeking straight ways' the Duke is dismissing the sexual relationship he had enjoyed with Diego/ Magdalen, and accepting his duty to marry Hippolyte.

In this way, Lee maps the Duke's experiences map onto the structure of the labyrinth, and underneath this superficial layer, lies the experiences of Eugene. The labyrinth becomes an intertextual reference to the Eugene's protracted and mediated recovery, itself informed by Lee's own reading upon the subject (most notably Féré) and her earlier experiences with Mary and Darmesteter. Furthermore, this freedom from the Duke's malaise echoes Theseus's escape from the Minotaur, with Ariadne's assistance, or Eugene's freedom from psycho-somatic illness with the assistance of Lee. The thread of free association, directed by the analyst, is the thread that enables freedom. The half-man, half-bull was the son of Pasiphae and a white bull, prized by Pasiphae's husband Minos. The prized bull should have been a sacrifice to Poseidon, and when Minos failed to offer the animal up to the waves, the God became livid. He seduced Pasiphae into copulating with the bull, and she gave birth to Minotaur. The beast was concealed in a maze—the Labyrinth—constructed by Daedalus, and instructed to do so by Minos; to conceal the family's shame.¹⁰⁵ The beast could not be satiated by Pasiphae's milk, so devoured human sacrifices. In her work considering the connection between human

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 248.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012), p. 282.

sexuality and malaise, entitled *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, Dorothy Dinnerstein concisely notes that ‘the fearsome minotaur, gigantic and eternally infantile offspring of a mother’s unnatural lust’ is a ‘male representative of mindless, greedy power’ one that ‘insatiably devours live human flesh’.¹⁰⁶ There is a symmetry between the Duke’s behaviour and that of Theseus, with the journey to the centre of the maze to slaughter the Minotaur representative of the pathway through layers of consciousness to reach the site of the unconscious. In this way, the journey becomes Lee’s metaphor for the hypnotic and free associative treatment with which Eugene eventually did rid himself of his psychosomatic invalidity. In providing Eugene with a trail with which to trace back through the stratified layers of memory to the initial noxa of his neurosis the analysis—the journey back through the labyrinth—enables the cathartic confrontation and eradication of the now unconscious, but nevertheless affecting, trauma. Furthermore, the Duke’s life in the maze of his illness has parallels with Eugene’s state of paralysis: The Duke states ‘I grew to understand life as a solid world: rock, fertile earth, veins of pure metal, mere mud, all strangely overlaid; and eternal fire at the core’.¹⁰⁷ The life of the Duke is weighted, physically. He is as stone, yet, like the sufferers of neurasthenia, there is a fire or sexual passion at the core of the neurosis: what Dinnerstein would call the insatiable desire for human flesh. The position of the labyrinth is on the Duke’s music room ceiling, requiring one to lie prostrate, as on a psychiatrist’s couch, in order to witness in its full glory. Dinnerstein explores further the dependency between the mother and the son in early childhood, and its relation to the Oedipal theory in Freudian psychoanalysis. Whilst it would be anachronistic to claim Lee’s *Ariadne in Mantua* explores the complex (and perhaps unnatural, due to a prolonged infantile dependency)¹⁰⁸ relationship between mother and son in this way, the theme of mother and son/ Matilda and Eugene is repeatedly encountered within her work. The Minotaur and Pasiphae are, after all, and unnatural family secret, hidden away. The Duke’s Princess notes that his symptoms may have stemmed—initially at least—from his attachment to his mother: he was ‘romantic, [and] favoured overmuch his tender mother’.¹⁰⁹

After discussing the labyrinth, and the Duke disclosing his desire for the straightened path, Diego and the Duke exit the scene. As they both do so, the Duke

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur, Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976), p.5.

¹⁰⁷ Lee, ‘Ariadne in Mantua’, p. 254.

¹⁰⁸ For a full discussion of this, refer to Part Two ‘The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World’ in Dorothy Dinnerstein’s *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (pp. 28-161).

¹⁰⁹ Lee, ‘Ariadne in Mantua’, p. 274.

begins to sing 'I'd like to die, but a little death only'.¹¹⁰ It appears that once the Duke has been cured of his malady, he desires the sexual release ('little death') unavailable to him during his illness. Both Cheyne, Fèrè and Freud all suggest that an all-consuming sexual desire is symptomatic of neurasthenia, yet this is paired with a frustrating impotency. Once the Duke has followed the psychological thread back to the site of his trauma, he is released from the 'eternal fire' burning in the stony body, to resume life as normal.¹¹¹

In the final act of Lee's play, Diego/Magdalen performs the myth of Ariadne for the wedding party of the Duke and the Princess Hippolyte. As Ariadne laments on stage her desertion by Theseus, the Duchess, studying the Duke's countenance, begins to worry his sickness is returning. The Duke relies: 'Nay mother. It will pass. Only a certain oppression at the heart, I was once subject to'.¹¹² The song by Ariadne, once sung to the Duke in his captivity with the infidels triggers a brief psychological relapse as he finally reaches the site of trauma. Diego/ Magdalen/ Ariadne's plunge into the lake, and to her death, is the thread that finally leads the Duke to his freedom. Lee, as the Diego figure, enables Eugene his freedom by her guidance into the labyrinth and through the thread of Ariadne—her mediation between Eugene and the mind doctors—enable him to return to a near normal life.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 262.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 254.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 290.

Conclusion

This project has highlighted the ways in which Lee's thought was informed by disciplines within the field of natural science. In doing so, I have brought to the forefront Lee's somewhat underused archive at the British Institute of Florence as a resource for interdisciplinary scholarship. These disciplines did not only shape or appear *within* Lee's narratives, but they also clarified Lee's process of writing overall. The stratigraphic model is the consistent thread which manifests itself in many of the fields Lee studied: from archaeology and physiography, to anthropology, and forms of biological inheritance. Not only did Lee engage with this model as a scientific framework, but the strata mapped onto Lee's own theories and practice of writing; beginning with *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical* (1880) and the 'scholar's copy book', through *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906) and the 'blotting-book mind', to *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (1923).

Lee's relationship to Richard Semon and theories of memory have provided the key to understanding Lee's use of stratigraphy in relation to textual theory. As mentioned, Semon's work was dismissed in his own lifetime, due to his commitment to ideas of neo-Lamarckian inheritance. This prompted a public refutation of this strand of Semon's theories by Lee, cuttingly, in an introduction to one of his own (posthumously translated works). Excitingly, Semon's work is now enjoying a resurgence, particularly in the field of contemporary neuroscience and transgenics.¹ Lee's use of Semon's microtome as a metaphor for exploring the stratified mnemonic storage within the brain has also found a modern equivalent in the CAT, MRI, and fMRI scanners. Current work in neuroaesthetics is measuring aesthetic empathy and the neurological responses to art using these new tools. Lee's 'Gallery Diaries' surely form something of a pre-cursor to these investigations.

Chapter II's response to the archaeological site is very clearly concerned with stratification, but the most interesting discovery is that in such clearly delineated lamina, Lee—akin to the blotting-book mind—conjoined fragments from multiple layers. This was to make Rome, what it was, to Lee and to Lee's reader. In doing so, I have perhaps come into conflict with Catherine Maxwell's 'Vernon Lee's Handling of Words' yet the

¹ Susumu Tonegawa, Xu Liu, Steve Ramirez, Roger Rendondo, 'Memory Cells Have Come of Age', *Neuron*, 5, 2 (September 2, 2015), pp. 918-31.

thesis is in agreement with Maxwell's contention that Lee's use of textual shaping, and its dynamism creates a collaborative interface between Lee and the reader.

This dissonance within the shifting definition of Rome relies on a personal mnemonic interaction with the city, and is something Laura Eastlake considers in *Ancient Rome and Victorian Masculinity*. She suggests that 'Roman legacy encompassed innumerable and often competing narrative and meanings, signifying everything from the loftiest heights of civic and military manliness, to decadence, degeneration and effeminacy'.² Boni's attempt to complete the narrative of the Forum's is counter to Lee (and Eastlake's) approach to the city. Rather than move through the strata individually and attempt to fill in the gaps, I show how Lee, in a creative act driven by memory, makes links between these gaps, in a textual rendering that transcends time and space.

Counter to Lee's 'what it is' approach to Rome, the Hellenic setting (and illustrations) for *The Ballet of Nations* becomes a *tabula rasa* on which to perform a play that attempts to transcend racial and nationalistic barriers. *The Ballet* exists on the Greek stage, but is European, nationalistic, pagan, contemporary and primitive: Lee is once more making her reader aware of the strata but transcending these lines. Lee's pacifist play is, as I have argued, heavily influenced by anthropological discourse, most notably the works of Ernest Crawley and Jane Ellen Harrison, who considered their contemporary religious and moral environment as a developmental quirk, evolved from the primitive mythic origins of the species. Furthermore, the anthropological question of a single or multiple origin for humankind is explored alongside Lee's attitude towards slavery.

The final three chapters all engage with biological and psychological strata, and whilst Shafquat Towheed's 'Creative Paradigms' provided a brief introduction to Lee's opinions on evolutionary theory post-1900, these chapters consider Lee's earlier reading and writing on the subject. Physiognomy is a pseudo-science, once lauded, then superseded, and then resurrected once more by the work of Cesare Lombroso, and Eugenic theory. Physiognomy provided for Lee a way of writing characters that could play with an already extant lexicon of facial characteristics and behaviours. But inversely, it also provided a way to read the reader: it revealed the reader's biases, and desires. Shoshanna Felman's ideas provided a critical methodology for exploring this phenomenon in which the reader becomes repositioned as the read subject. These layers

² Laura Eastlake, *Ancient Rome and Victorian Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), [n.p.]. p. 11.

of reading likewise echoed the stratification of the feature/trait binary. Lee's recognition in 'Lavater's House at Zurich' of the ways in which physiognomy fed into and developed other psychological and aesthetic practises foregrounds the superseding and stratified nature of the sciences. AI facial recognition software has replaced the physiognomic arts, with systems being utilized for security, retail and law enforcement purposes. Like physiognomic reading, this development has multiple ethical issues which tie in to Felman's reader being read hypothesis. Psychologist Michal Kosinski's research at Stanford University purports to be able to identify an individual's sexuality by reading the physiognomic features.³ Of what use and for what means is this technology to be used? Lee's narrator in 'Oke of Okehurst' is evidence that this form of facial reading (albeit in a much more primitive state) is riddled with inaccuracies and problematic value judgements.

Both Lee's responses to the marriages of Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter and Eugene Lee-Hamilton and Annie E. Holdsworth, have been explored by Lee scholars in numerous critical works. Yet these chapters take a different approach in discussing Lee's opinions as a manifestation of her understanding biological inheritance, by suggesting that Lee amalgamates stratified scientific discourses, to produce personal blotting-book theory combining heredity and morality. Eugene's illness allowed for an exploration of Lee's reading in psycho-somatic sexual disorders, but also provided the scope to consider Eugene's own literary works as an expression of his illness. Lee's rendering of Eugene's narrative within her own works—Eugene as intertext—allowed Lee a fictional space in which she was able to unearth his noxa, reach the substrata of the unconscious and effect a recovery.

The thesis begins with drawing together strands of memory and strata, a concept originating in the work of Richard Semon. Semon's structure of the mnemonic substance is organised in chronological layers, with each engram being recalled from its position within the mnemonic substance after a sensory trigger. The retrieval of a memory/engram is akin, structurally, to the excavation of the archaeological site; a metaphor posited by Semon himself. This parallel was most famously discussed in Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1937), in which he renders a connection between archaeology and exploring the depths of the unconscious mind. Yet Lee was exploring

³ Paul Lewis, '“I was Shocked it was so Easy”: Meet the Professor who says Facial Recognition can tell if you are Gay', in *The Guardian* (July 7, 2018) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jul/07/artificial-intelligence-can-tell-your-sexuality-politics-surveillance-paul-lewis> [accessed July 30, 2018].

(perhaps unconsciously) these ideas in her 1902 journal entry 'The Excavations'. There are distinct confluences between Lee and Freud's practice: Lee's experience of the dig, and the artefacts discovered is one of recovery, as is Freud's analysis of his patient's underlying trauma. The fragmentary artefacts also exist anachronistically, both in historic time and in Lee's own temporal moment: they are fragments of the past and present simultaneously, akin to the recalled engram of Semon's mnemonic structure. The anachronistic remnant is a thread that also runs through chapter III, and its consideration of Lee's interest in anthropology and ethnology. The revenant, both in its character and ritual form, is presented in Lee's pacifist narrative *The Ballet of the Nations*, in which figures from past and present perform the ceremony of the war dance. In this iteration, Lee uses memories of past and present civilization as a warning to future humankind; a projection of memory beyond the temporal present: a transmission of memories to future generations.

The inheritance of memory is further explored in chapter III by the foregrounding of Lee's maternal ancestry and the West Indian roots of the Adams family. This chapter considers Lee's letter to Mary Robinson, written at the Adams ancestral home Middleton Hall, where Lee highlights the traits passed down through generations of her mother's family. Through multiple generations a similarity in both appearance and behaviour is noted, something which Lee believes she is exempt from. There is a bringing together of family history, the extraordinary behaviour of some members of the Adams family, and the representation of that individual in portrait form. This thread continues into chapter IV which considers Lee's engagement with the science of physiognomy. 'Oke of Okehurst', a short story which charts the degeneration of an ancestral line through the growing similarities between two identical female members of the family, living centuries apart.

Lee's own ancestral taint, discussed in chapter III is woven through chapter VI, with Lee's suggestion that it is heredity, rather than overwork, that has caused her brother's paralysis. This focus on heritability of psychological disorders, particularly from Eugene's maternal ancestry is a keen source of interest for Lee, and also of concern.

This thesis also engages with the continuing evolution of scientific thought and the subsequent superseded concepts. Lamarck's inheritance of acquired characteristics appears throughout the thesis, and is particularly noted in Hering and Semon's theories in chapter I. Lee's essay 'Lavater's House' is concerned with this aspect of scientific research. Despite emphasizing the pseudo-scientific position Lavater's physiognomic

analysis now occupied, Lee was able to position Lavater's theories as the foundations for contemporary scientific thought, for example Lombroso's criminology and Nordau's theories of degeneration. This aspect of scientific discovery is replicated by Lee in her use of 'superseded' narratives; re-written works, 'The Phantom Lover' becoming 'Oke of Okehurst', the study of Farinelli in *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, and his subsequent fictional renderings in 'Winthrop's Adventure; or, A Culture Ghost' and 'A Wicked Voice'.

In bringing together literature and science in this single author study, there has also been an attempt to bridge the divide between late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Lee is considered both as a Victorian, and a proto-modernist. There is, at present, significant critical engagement exploring the interconnections between late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century literature and science, yet scholarship upon Lee's work within this field is yet to be explored in any depth. Anne Stiles' *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century* considers the developing nineteenth-century science of neurology, and the ways in which structures of cerebral localization are reflected within the novels of writers such as Marie Corelli and H. G. Wells (both connected to Lee).⁴ Stiles' chapter 'Photographic Memory in the works of Grant Allen' conceptualizes memory as a chain of 'photographs' stored in the mnemonic photo album or gallery in the brain. Whilst this metaphor bears similarities with Lee's scholar's copy-book model, Lee's own ideas at this period were under the process of evolution, driven by a personal friendship with biologist and mnemonic theorist, Richard Semon.

Eleanor Dobson and Gemma Banks' edited issue of *Victoriographies*, 'Strata: Geology, Archaeology, and Psychology in Victorian and Edwardian Literature', brings together a selection of essays concerned with stratification in literature, most notably Angie Blumberg's 'Strata of the Soul: The Queer Archaeologies of Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde'.⁵ This essay presents Lee and Wilde's inclusions of historic material artefacts as a way to facilitate queer expression, drawing attention to Freud's analogy between psychoanalysis and archaeology. Whilst exploring archaeological tropes present in Lee's works, Blumberg fails to consider Lee's 'The Excavations' or *Louis Norbert*, works arguably integral to unravelling Lee's thoughts on archaeology, and texts considered in

⁴ Anne Stiles, *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵ Angie Blumberg, 'Strata of the Soul: The Queer Archaeologies of Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde', *Victoriographies: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Writing, 1790-1914*, eds. Eleanor Dobson, Gemma Banks. 7:3 (2017), 239-256.

chapter II of this thesis. Chapter II also explores positions of observation; from the surface looking below—in archaeological science—to the study of the surface from above—the ‘Outlook Tower’ of Patrick Geddes. Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* is a unique exploration of the history of vision, questioning the ‘problematic phenomenon of the observer’ and the ways in which the observing subject is the historic site and product of certain practices and techniques of subjectification.⁶ Crary’s work examines objects of observation, such as stereoscopes and the camera obscura.

The figure of the New Woman in literature as a proponent of the eugenic movement is of particular interest to scholars concerned with the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century period. Teresa Mangum’s *Married, Middlebrow and Militant Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* and Angelique Richardson’s *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* engage with the literary works of writers such as Sarah Grand, George Egerton and Mona Caird, and their eugenic plots.⁷ Whilst Mangum and Richardson’s works focus on the positive use of eugenics to counter evolution and degeneration within the novel, as well as a eugenic feminism as a means to change society, both works lack a ‘real world’ example, such as Lee’s eugenic concerns at the marriage of Mary Robinson and James Darmesteter (explored in chapter IV of this thesis). Richardson’s work focuses on the work of Karl Pearson, another correspondent of Lee’s, and the membership of his ‘Men and Women’s Club’ of which Jane Hume Clapperton (whose Scientific Meliorism is also explored in chapter IV). Significantly, Lee’s use of Lamarckian models of inheritance to argue against the marriage of James and Mary, is highlighted by Donald J. Childs’ as a common trait amongst modernist writers in *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration*.⁸ Childs states the modernist’s eugenic beliefs often relied upon shaky and superseded science—such as Lamarck’s inheritance of acquired characteristics.

Lee’s interest in psycho-somatic disorders also stemmed from personal experiences: her brother Eugene Lee-Hamilton’s neurasthenic paralysis lasted almost twenty years. Lee’s mediation, both in person and in letters, between Eugene and his

⁶ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London & Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

⁷ Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow and Militant Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1998) and Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁸ Donald J. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

eminent doctors—often ground-breaking physicians such as John Hughlings Jackson and Jean-Martin Charcot—and her care and treatment of his neurasthenia became a source of inspiration for her fiction. Anne Stiles’ edited collection *Neurology and Literature, 1860-1920* includes a chapter by Kristine Swenson that has parallels with Lee and Eugene’s own relationship: ‘Doctor Zay and Dr. Mitchell: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Feminist Response to Mainstream Neurology’.⁹ Whilst working with the casenotes of Eugene, and Lee’s letters, I have taken care not to sensationalize the personal lives of Lee, Eugene, Mary and Darmesteter, and have offered no diagnoses other than those provided by medical professionals employed by Lee or Eugene. The personal correspondence between Lee and her family has provided a stratified (temporally and spatially) way of exploring Lee’s engagement with theories of biological and psychological inheritance. The appendix provided reproduces any letters used that have yet to be published.

Finally, I hope that this thesis has shown the integral part Lee (and other women) played in discussing, questioning and writing the natural sciences during this period. Where possible I have chosen to use the work of female scientists and thinkers (Marion Newbigin, Jane Hume Clapperton, Annie Besant, Jane Harrison, et al.) and critical theorists (Shoshana Felman and Julia Kristeva).

⁹ Kristine Swenson’s ‘Doctor Zay and Dr. Mitchell: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Feminist Response to Mainstream Neurology’, in *Neurology and Literature, 1860-1920*, ed. Anne Stiles (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) pp. 97-118.

Afterword

The British Institute of Florence archive of Lee's library has revealed that there is still much more to be known regarding Lee's reading and the ways in which this impacted upon her own work. In establishing a model of stratigraphical writing and reading that draws on and is illustrated by Lee's reading in the sciences there are opportunities for developing these strands.

What has been made evident is that Lee's scientific interest was not superficial, and the ways in which she engages with difficult concepts and theories impacted her personal life, alongside her literary output. I would suggest that there is an intellectual case for further exploration of Lee's reading in the sciences by a) digitising the archival resources and marginalia therein, allowing greater accessibility to Lee scholars, and b) by examining Lee's engagement—both socially and professionally—with a network of scientists and scholars. Of special interest in the unravelling of these networks should be the reclamation of female-led scientific study. This would intersect well with the work currently being produced on Lee, sexuality and gender. How does Lee approach and utilize the work of other women within the archive?

As discussed above, the contemporary applications of neuroaesthetics has provided scholars working on Lee's aesthetic empathy the opportunity to explore her work with contemporary audiences. There is scope to expand this into other fields, particularly mnemonic studies, and the psychology of reading.

Appendix

Correspondence

Vernon Lee (Liverpool), to Matilda Paget (Bagni di Lucca, Italy)
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #360.
September 2, 1887

Liverpool Sept. 2 (1887)

Got here last night after 12 hours journey having driven above Edinbro' for an hour.¹
Picturesque place. Shall go up to town on Monday 5th to see more Drs. I don't know yet what day I can find a convenient tide for St. Malo, but shd. like to start in a week. Mary will join me in Paris the 18th.²

Vernon Lee (Liverpool), to Matilda Paget (Bagni di Lucca, Italy)
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #361.
September 2, 1887

Liverpool Sept. 2 (1887)

Dearest Mamma

It is late, but as there is a question of these kind people taking me to Chester tomorrow, and the train company with the foreign mail leaves early, I must last scratch of a line.

I let Charleton yesterday at 9. Kit Anstruther Thomson drove me to a place called Largo on the Forth: the Canongate and Conegate are awfully picturesque and foreign. I did not arrive here till near eleven: a hard day's journey for so small a distance. The Ybarrondos are delightfully kind: she took me to Manchester, a grimy hole, to see the very fine loan exhibition of modern pictures today.³ Everything is most frightfully comfortable with hot water and cold water and carpets everywhere and gas all over the place and greenhouses full of orchids. But oh dear, what I would give to be back at Charleton, where the lawn was never mowed, and the staircase rods were all loose. And we had to grope downstairs to dinner except when somebody gave us the unusual treat

¹ Lee is referring to Edinburgh.

² Saint-Malo is a port town in Brittany, France.

³ Domingo de Ybarrondo (1843-1909) lived in Aigburth, Liverpool with his wife. He ran the Liverpool Meter Company Limited, and the Street Lighting Company Limited.

of a smoky petroleum lamp on the landing. I never felt any where so very at home and welcome, nor so much one of the family as with this old fox hunting laird and his daughters + Eton boy + little grandchild.

I have not yet heard from Mrs Stillman whether she can have me: if not I must go to Earl's Terrace. I have had a most sad letter from Mr Robinson and another from Mabel. It appears none of Mary's friends answered with one word of congratulations.

At Manchester today I met Mr von Glehn, brother of Mrs Creighton, who lives with his wife next door to the Robinsons—"Mary's news is not very good I fear"—he said, very concernedly. I saw what he meant: he looked quite sad.

Meanwhile Mary writes the jubilant letters about it all. The Robinson's hope she may still recognize her mistake and break off; but that's all talk. Mabel tells me she suspected Mary's intentions to him she left her to go to Ireland a fortnight ago. There was something cruel in its having been done behind all our backs, mother, sister and me all away. It seems somehow much worse now than I thought it at Charleton, more of a reality.

So much love,

V.

Vernon Lee (Liverpool) to Matilda Paget (Bagni Di Lucca).

Vernon Lee Letters Home, #323.

September 5, 1887.

Liverpool Sept. 5.

I go up to town this afternoon, to Challoner St. as the R's cook is ill.⁴ I shall see Dr. H & if possible Hughlings Jackson tomorrow or the day after. I hope to cross the end of the week, but the weather has set in for awful, & if it continues I shall have to go by Dieppe.

Address St. Melanie Parhombrelle, C.O. Fu. du Nord.

Vernon Lee (London), to Matilda Paget (Bagni Di Lucca).

Vernon Lee Letters Home, #363.

September 6, 1887.

15 Cavendish Square, W1.

⁴ Challoner Street is situated in West Kensington, London.

These remedies to be taken for a long time six months in a year. If there is excess of hyper aesthesia take the bromide dose two or three times a day.

If on the other hand the nights are better and the hyper aesthesia less then omit the bromide altogether or reduce the dose to one half.⁵

Sept. 6th Earl's Terrace (1887)

Dearest Mamma—I was awfully, awfully touched by the two letters I found here last night. Thank you a thousand times for letting me ask Miss Anstruther Thomson: she is simple and quiet, despite her [?] appearance, and will give no trouble.

Tell Eugene that the little virtues he quoted apply but the other way; and this is the reason of my gratitude ~~for~~ towards my devoted friend. I went to W the chemist this morning. She had consulted with Hughlings Jackson over E's memos and notes.

Alas! I saw at once the man was already nonplussed by the failure of the bromide and did not know what to prepare.⁶ I fear you will be very, very much disappointed—poor Eugene! I am less so for I never expected anything, nay rather dreaded some possible evil results. Dr H. is anxious E shd. try this other medicine, which is a strong nerve tonic, but he begs him to continue the bromides. Dr H. confidently hopes that, without anything happening, E will grow out of the disease. He says it is a mistake to suppose that time of life doesn't affect men for the better like women. He says he knows sensual cases of nervous diseases being outgrown, apparently by a spontaneous regeneration of the organism.

I arrived last night and am sleeping in the Stillman's empty house, but having meals here. Mabel is away. Miss R. is quite marvellously good, wise and lost in this matter; Mr R. looks aged by ten years and is very obstinate. I think they had better let Mary have her own way, for this certainly won't prevent her. Besides, as the man is really to promise that the marriage will remain purely platonic (his promise isn't worth much, except if he founded as is likely upon a [?] of his own tradition) it may all be for her happiness. Anyway, there it is. My position is a little difficult, especially as he persists in imagining it must all be the same.

⁵ Eugene's prescription from Hughlings Jackson.

⁶ Bromide, or potassium bromide was used to treat cases of hysterical epilepsy.

I propose crossing Friday night for the weather doesn't tend to disperse. I make crossing be back the 1st. I have no heart to pay any visits, and now I have left my kind Charleton I only wish to get home and work. Pray keep all about Mary an absolute secret. V.

Vernon Lee (Paris, France), to Matilda Paget (Bagni Di Lucca).
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #328.
September 18, 1887.

Paris Sept 18

Arrived here last night after 12 hours fever in Brittany—will never go back there, upon my word! Such dirt and discomfort! Found Mary all night here (at present introduced by brother in law of Mr. D) We leave by the 9pm and hope to get to Asti sometime tomorrow. No letter from you.

Vernon Lee (Venice, Italy), to Eugene Lee-Hamilton (Florence, Italy).
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #332.
September 26, 1887.

Hotel Beau Rivage V

Monday

Got here this morning at 5.30, _____ tired, and found all back rooms free, which is a bore. The Bergeest, Watkins etc. here. I don't know when Mary will have finished with her archives; but if it are not soon enough to permit of our going to Florence together the 1st or latest 2nd, I must leave her.

I can give you no idea of the kindness & delightfulness of the Alfieris. Today Wmo Pasolini has written to say she is at Varese but will we go to her home at Ravenna notwithstanding. Of course not. So many thanks for the net.

Vernon Lee (Venice, Italy), to Eugene Lee-Hamilton (Florence, Italy).
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #334.
September 29, 1887.

Venice Thursday

Dearest Mamma,

I intend arriving in Florence Sunday evening. If Mme Pisani asks us to Vescovana, as is likely, we shall stop Sat. there.⁷

I hear the Sargent's have taken the Portz apartment outside Pa Romana.

I confess I am much easier in my mind about Mary. Yesterday came a long letter from her man, which she read to me. It is very strange, but extremely reassuring. He says that he has long ago made up his mind that he ought to have no children, that he has never wished for any & that marriage in the ordinary sense is odorous to him; that he proposed to Mary because, considering his health, he thought she might be willing to accept his condition under which alone he would get married. That he feels in such a way that if they had lived in the same place & could have seen much of each other without exciting gossip, he would never have wished to marry, not at all. It is all very extraordinary and not very human. But he seems fully aware of what he is about, and determined to have no nonsense; and at the same time he seems intensely fond of her & very good; the letter is more like what one woman might write to another.

His other letters to her, which she has shown me, are quite charmingly delicate & tender. He refuses to take anything from Mr. Robinson, & makes his present income amount to about £500. He says that in any other case such an arrangement wd. be impossible, & that he quite understands people's incredulity.

He is so strange, yet is evidently good & kind, that considering Mary's peculiar physical condition, it is just possible all may come right. After all, one cannot make rules for exceptional people. If this man is a monstrosity, it must be admitted that he is a very dignified & high-minded one. I believe he is coming to Florence quite soon.

D'Annunzio is a little blond chap, looking not more than 22 or 23, rather like an inferior Boutourline. He is not at all coming on, & has good manners. He is coming to Florence. His wife has been staying here & they now have 3 children.⁸

Still I suspect him rather of being—well—a Neapolitan.

He has come here with a friend who translates Shelley, all alone in a two-mast boat from Pescara in the Neapolitan, Tonight we dine at the Bronson's.

So much love.

V.

I enclose a memorandum about my room.

⁷ Vescovana is a municipality of Padua.

⁸ Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was a poet dramatist and writer.

If the cocoa matting of the hall has been cleaned, I think it had better be put down at once, as the floor is spoilt. Also I want the matting down in my dressing room, Where I shall sleep. I should particularly dislike sleeping in the same room with Mary, as she requires all the windows shut. Will you order some Marsala, as Mary is supposed to take port.

Vernon Lee (Venice, Italy), to Matilda Paget, (Florence, Italy).
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #335.
October 1, 1887.

There has been a confusion with the Pisani, to whom we had intended going today, so we shall go there tomorrow afternoon, taking the corresponding train at Rourgo the following day. We thus arrive at Florence Monday evening at 9.45. The porter had better bring his car for the luggage at the station. I am very sorry for the delay, but I don't like to deprive Mary of Vescovana.

Vernon Lee, to Eugene Lee-Hamilton, *Vernon Lee: Letters Home*. 402.
Vernon Lee Letters Home, #402
August 14-14, 1888.

Charleton

Dearest Eugene

I am so awfully sorry to hear that you have been ill all this time.

It is quite a long while since the tyres were shipped, so I imagine Bogga will have them almost immediately. I write to you yourself I don't know why, but perhaps I have seemed to fade away in this long silence. The not writing is a mere measure of precaution, but I hope soon to have done with it. I hope also to get over the curious relapse I had last month, before which I really seemed to be getting stronger. I find I may not require after all any extraordinary journeys, etc. I am longing to return to Italy; but Kit says the journey etc. would only make me worse, I am getting to hate this north, their eternal grey sky.

I could not let Mary continue writing to me: such a proceeding wd, on the lines suggested by you, have been a very dangerous beginning for her married life. It will be difficult enough and even _____ I get over my repugnance, I am bound in honour to

remove myself from the path of two people between whom I cd be but an apple of discord. I wrote this to Mary, in _____ of her writing to Kit saying she intended to write to me; and thus the matter has been settled for good and ok. Indeed it was the only way. Mamma knows this is as much for her as for you.

So much love,

Yr V.

Vernon Lee, to Eugene Lee-Hamilton, *Vernon Lee: Letters Home*. 414.

Vernon Lee Letters Home, #414.

October 15, 1888.

Dearest Eugene

I didn't write immediately on Kit's receiving yr book because I was ready and because I wanted to read as many of the sonnets as possible.

I like them immensely although I don't care for sonnets as such; and the only thing that worries me in the book is that too much is crammed into it, so that it leaves a confused impression & the recollection of one sonnet is likely to be intruded on by the presence of another. I like best, I think, the 3 women of course, which are equal to anything you have done; *facilio*, *Seurat*, *Latude*, *R. of Benivento*, the *evanego* sonnet & the lonely *Walton*.

Forgive my stupidity. They are talking in the next room, & my brains are still weak. Andrew Lang, who has kindly undertaken to put my book of stories before Longmans, writes that he has lost yr book, but is ordering another copy; I wd send him one, were I you.

Today Kit & I are going up to a farm for 3 or 4 days, as there are to be talks etc. there. I have hired a pony so as to be able to ride as much as possible before Tangiers. I find it much more difficult than I anticipated, but it does me much good. This is one reason why I don't wish to go to T. before December.

I now drive well. Tell mamma with a 1000 thanks that I fear the mosquito curtains wd be in _____ before they arrive here. Tell me all about the Carrian.

YV.

Vernon Lee (Naples, Italy), to Matilda Paget (Florence, Italy).

Vernon Lee Letters Home, #445.

January 28, 1889.

Naples 28 Monday

Dearest Mamma, I have just got a letter from Eugene sent on from Tangier. Whither it had been sent from, S. Francisco California altho' most of the date is the 6th Dec. It is the letter telling me how bad he is! Do you see now that I never understood completely. It seems so bitterly cruel just that letter shd. have been lost. But I think I cd. be of use, I will be very quiet. I think I do well to go to Rome first. I have got accustomed to the heat and Maria is so kind.

Vernon Lee (Rome, Italy), to Matilda Paget (Florence, Italy).
Vernon Lee Letters Home #448.
February 7, 1889.

Dearest Mamma, thanks a 1000 times for yr very kind letter. Eugene's today puzzles me. Of course I will try to see Dr. Luys & his machine. But how after Kit's letter can E imagine that any hypnotic experiment can or ought to be made without a Dr? Remember that Tormmas's never charged for at least 10 visits to me [...]

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Vernon Lee,
Somerville Archive, 1.
January 1, 1890.

(Dictated)

Dearest Bags,

I should have written sooner, but Ponce de Leon, Miss Little and Miss Snow had to be attended to. Miss Little accepts in principle, but the time of her visit is uncertain.

The fumista came and found that it was impossible to cure the drawing room chimney by attacking it through your room. He said that the chimney would smoke for ever, unless something of the nature of a small mantle were put, and so we have had it done. I don't think it looks bad at all, and the chimney is apparently cured.

Madame Villari has returned by post your type-writer of two novels.

The Countess Resse has sent you a beautiful basketful of jonquies and hyacinths and a Chinese primrose in a pot.

Miss Craigmugle is teaching me some magnificent bits from Omar Khaijam. The other day I dictated sixty-five lines of Ponce—more than I have ever done in my life at one sitting, but I feel very doubtful as to the tragedy as a whole, on account of those confounded love-geese.

Amy comes this evening. Rosa has had the influenza, but is up again; still weak. Mind you don't shorten your stay on my account.

E.

Hell is the vision of a soul on fire.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archive, 2.
September 14, 1890.

Dictated

Dearest Bags

Please send me at once an order on the National Library for Verci's L'Aria degh Eggolini. I am better but not yet all right again.

Here it is cool & windy. I hear that Madame Villari is, or will be at Venice, so send your gondola with a sharp subaqueous spear.

We are having a wise & urgent change, made in the kitchen heart with the authorization of the Besse's, so as to get hold of the coke burning machine & make things exactly as they were in Via Garibaldi. The coke involves an absolutely unnecessary expense of nearly three hundred a year over & above what we ^need^ burn in charcoal. The expense of the transformation of the hearth will be about a hundred francs and it will be well worth it. It was Giovanni who suggested it.

The Turstons including Amy are gone for a month to Viareggio.

Who was it who sent you the Debats with the article on Mary.⁹ I sent you the wrapper that you might identify the writing. French papers must be queers political organs to afford her so much space. If I were she I should feel very painfully the contrast between her French and English prominence, especially as the writer & readers Debats have never read a line of her in the original.

E.

⁹ The *Journal des débats*, a French newspaper.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archive, 3.
September 20, 1890.

Dictated

Dearest Bags

Bourget has sent you a faire past of his marriage. I suppose you ought to send him congratulations or condolences. The faire past which is a month old is sent in the name of Madame Bourget Boulevard de la Pyramide Clermont Ferrand, but if you know his Paris address you had better to send it to him.

Miss Preston has sent you her translation from the Frederick Michael's misses. The book is published by Unwin but sent you in her name.

There are horrendous fêtes going on for the uncovering of the equestrian statue of Victor Emanuel in the new piazza of the ex-ghetto; bright green illuminations & _____ fireworks.¹⁰ The King and Queen are here, & the electric train between piazza San Marco & Fiesole was opened yesterday replacing the old steam (San Gervasio) train. It does not seem on a train but in singles cars, which I can see go the past, on the hill of Fiesole from my corner in the garden. After lunch they give out electric flashes, which I should think would be very annoying for horses.

I have got Verci's history of the E Jenkins from the National Library; but the part which deals with death & _____ is in itself 300 pages long so that I am rather at a loss how to get what I want out of such a long chronicle published in 1779, it is a hard mass to wade through.

As to the article on Mary, foreign papers are really too comical: the *Nazione* publishes two longer on Homburger as much space & more than our English daily papers would devote to Darwin or Browning.¹¹ Homburger was a kind & intelligent man but did he ever do more for his own glory than furnish the second floor of the Palazzo della Bosson? The article also gives a good deal of space to the angelic character of his widow.

Since the last two or three days I have had _____ of the feverishness & local symptoms.

By the way, have you seen that a considerable part of the Alhambra at Grenada has been burnt down apparently by malice.

¹⁰ This is the statue of Vittorio Emanuele II, located in Piazza Vittorio Veneto, Florence.

¹¹ *La Nazione*, a newspaper based in Florence.

E.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archive, 4.
October 9, 1890.

Dearest Bags,

The day before yesterday, the Countess Basponi paid me an-other visit she really is wonderfully kind, she brought me notes of passages in date respecting Erggellnio.

I am in the middle of a great revolution in the system of tying up my feet. I have given up the strap plan & adopted a fur bag & cushions in which the feet are not locked to each other & I hope to have put an end for good to the constant torture, I have undergone for the last few years. It has also the advantage of greatly diminishing the external deformity of my sophia.

Yesterday I had a letter from Bella who seems to be quite comfortably installed with the family of a Frau Baronin at Berlin.

A magazine called the Review of Reviews has come for you. DO you want it sent on? By the way I forgot to tell you that a photograph of the portrait of a woman signed Isabella Gardiner has been sent you, it is largish with a letter evidently from the same person, which are sent on to you a little while ago.

Did I tell you that we hear that Madame Bergeest asks six hundred thousand francs damages for the killing of her husband. I wonder when the rain will finally comes, for the last six weeks the water has had to be pumped up to the first floor by Giovanni & in town there is not even acqua potabile.

E.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, to Vernon Lee. Somerville. Archive, 5.
Somerville. Archive, 5.
October 13, 1890.

Dearest Bags

I hope your birthday & that _____ will be better.

I think it is a great act of brigandage on your part, to have taken possession of Maria Pasolini's house without her knowledge.

We sent you all your & Kit's riding materials the day before yesterday, we also sent you on a letter from the Contemporary.

Yesterday the Marchesa Incontini & the Marchesa Pareto called but did not find you at home.

The Countesse Besse has been showering apples on us, she wrote us a very nice sympathizing note in which she said that she did not come to the Palmerino as she did not know if it would give pleasure. So I have written to ask her to come & see me, she has not done so yet, but has fired a fresh bombardment of apples. So I suppose it is alright.

Miss Snow has sent me an American Review very like the Nineteenth Century called the Commonwealth & published at No 1117 Eighteenth Street Denver which I find is the Capital of the State of Colorado. It contains an article of twelve pages on my poetry by herself.

Yesterday evening as Mamma was returning from her rides, her horse's collar broke in the middle of our lane, & she had to send Giovanni to the coachman's help. As Mamma said "andate al coachiere s'e rotto il collo, Giovanni was much relieved to find the coachman still alive.¹²

I hear that you have had rain in north Italy, here (with the exception of a couple of tiny thunder storms) we have had no rain whatever since you left, the weather is Heavenly but terrible want of water.

Still no change of any sort between this & that cure.

I am very glad you are to get a little riding again. Do you still think of trying to sell the pony on your return?

Very sweet things to Kit.

E.

Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget.
Vernon Lee Letters Home.
August 1, 1892.

Kit insists on going to the psychological congress today!

¹² Matilda says 'Go to the coachman, the neck's broke'.

Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget.
Vernon Lee Letters Home.
August 2, 1892.

2 August—Dearest Mamma,
Kit is better. Been twice to Psychological Congress. Helmholtz was there, Sully, Bain, Galton, etc. Also (as listener) Stanley, strange, impassive like a Roman Emperor, not a 19th century mortal. Most interesting hypnotic experiment by Dr. Bramwell. Remarkable new lights on suggestion in functional diseases. Going again tomorrow to see more. Liébeault, Charcot's rival there also. Will write more. Love to Papa—
Yrs V.

Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget.
Vernon Lee Letters Home.
August 5, 1892.

Aug 5.
Dearest Mamma
I went again to the psychological congress & saw some more most curious experiments of suggestion. 2. This might suggest points to E, so I will treasure them. 3. Also much interested in the new developments of the nervous diseases & hyperaesthetic states. 4. For instance, possibility of storing up impressions and suggestions received in a morbid condition to act on him long after in a non-morbid state.

Vernon Lee (Nervi, Italy), to Matilda Paget (Florence, Italy).
Vernon Lee Letters Home, # 660.
February 6, 1893.

Dearest Mamma. So delighted Papa is better. Eugene must not mind being bad, tho' I am most sorry he should be, because Dr. Erb told me it was impossible for him now to be ever permanently the worse for a relapse, as it is now a mere matter of hyperaesthesia. Miss Sellers wants to come for 3 days from Sunday morning next. We shall be back at Florence Saturday afternoon for dinner. I sent off my dialogue to Harris' this morning. This place has made me quite strong.
So much love, V.

Vernon Lee, to Matilda Paget.
Vernon Lee Letters Home.
July 13, 1893.

9 Kensington Sq. Mansions
Young Street W.
July 13.

Dearest Mamma-

If you saw the heap of notes I have to write every morning you wd understand why I have not written; particularly as McIlvaine presses me for the end of the book.¹³

Please tell Eugene how awfully glad I am at all he tells me. He seems to understand his own case perfectly now, and understanding, he ought to be able, with patience and determination, to dominate it.

The new book is called "Althea, a second series of dialogues on aspirations & duties"—Althea is one of the speakers. There are to be 6 dialogues—the 6th is the one I am at now. The are—

- I. The Value of the individual (with Fife background)
- II. Orpheus in Rome (on the moral values of art)
- III. On friendship (with S. Terenzo background)
- IV. May Day (Roman Background)
- V. The Spiritual Life (Fiesole in Winter)
- VI. To what purpose? (summing up, Oxford background)

It is far the most important book I have so far written, and a great, immeasurable advance on Baldwin. It all comes out of notes I have kept for myself during the last 6 years; and there is no special pleading in it. The various views are based upon a conception which I call The Spiritual Life, and the new dialogue must trace them back to it. It is a study, on the whole, not of everybody's duty but of the duties of those who have spiritual conceptions & compensations & being freer than others from the ties of the world (desire for pleasure, prosperity, ambition, vanity) ought to act as pioneers for those far more numerous persons whom circumstances & temper render less free. The book treats openly only of such persons as the Gospels call the Salt of the Earth; the question is,

¹³ Publisher James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. based at 45 Albemarle Street, London.

how are they not to lose their saviour, or as little of it as possible? So of course it will be financially & otherwise a dead failure.

By the way could Eugene look out for me in the Gospel the exact quotation about the Salt of the Earth? I want it for a quotation, & I don't believe there's a Bible, except a Greek testament, in this very Hellenic house.

I want Miss Jourdan kindly to get me two photos which Clara Pater wants. They are (unmounted) two of the prettiest of the Robbia Wickel Kindchen of the Annunziata.¹⁴ Miss Pater already has the little boy who has got loose from his swaddlings. Where is the rest?

Vernon Lee, to Annie Lee-Hamilton.
Vernon Lee: Letters Home, #883.
September 14, 1909.

September 14,

My dear Nannie,¹⁵

You were right last night & I can quite understand it. It is horrible to make you face possible separation from the house & servants while all is yet so fresh & cruel. But, dear, I should never have alluded to plans if you had not begun to discuss this at the B. di L. already and in the train.

Having hurt you (and hurt myself, for I feel a brute) so much last night shows that I must not allow you to discuss these matters with me at present, because the more I think over the situation the more I am convinced of the danger of keeping the house & servants as a speculation; at the same time I am aware that it is unreasonable to ask you to face the inevitable so soon after the catastrophe & while every fibre in you is clinging to old times & whatever represents them. I have no right to disguise my belief as to what is the wise and necessary plan; but I do not want to hurt you with my ideas.

You have till February to make up your mind about the house; please, please, do not talk to me about it till you can listen without wincing & I can speak without disgracing myself.

Yrs V.

Exact copy.

¹⁴ Andrea della Robbia's tondos on the Ospedale degli Innocenti, at the Piazza Santissima Annunziata, Florence.

¹⁵ Annie E. Holdsworth-Hamilton.

Patrick Geddes, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives.
May 5, 1910.

University College,
Dundee.

4/5/10

Dear Miss Paget

I was very glad to meet you, & I look forward to a fuller & more leisured talk next time—perhaps in July? —when I'll be in London once this pageant of which you'll find an indication in the finished matter sent herewith, and when I hope you'll give me an indication of your passing.

I send you to a sample of the biological studies I've been going on with since the *Evolu. Of Sex* (look at "Principles (VII-X) before the drier "History").

Also of my sociological courses. One of "Country and Town", also of "Survey of Cities". Always the same endeavour to observe and interpret alternatively.

My best work however remains unpublished: I go on perfecting it in thought (or I think and hope) without being able to reach expression. Out of touch as I have been with my more sternly anatomical and physiological brethren & with Darwinists and Weismannists _____ also, I need to find a little arrangement from then to when a more vital view of evolution is congenial; and so I'll be pleased if any of this only summarized hints of this in these lecture _____ should appeal to you.

If you see my daughter's agent make her tell you what I meant by suggesting that life might be more than ever Olympian, Parnassian even, & she will dress up the argument cleanly enough I think. That would be one of these unwritten books.

Meantime before summer. I'll look up your books. You give me a conviction of real sympathy & insight, but also of not yet having quite expressed—not quite _____ or thought out—the best that is in you—of also lacking perhaps the needed environment of active and sympathetic minds on this or that side, I much though I doubt not you are an [alien?]

I have heard once & again lately of Benedetto Croce & his _____ as the opening future of Florence. Are you in this circle, & one that book of Croce's lately translated, (I think an "aesthetic" I must see it) adequately represents it?

With remembrances & best wishes to Miss Anstruther Thomson & Miss F

Believe me
Your very _____
P Geddes

Patrick Geddes, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives.
July, 1910.

2 More's Garden
Cheyne Walk SW
Juls. Eng.
Dear Miss Paget

Let me put down as we are, so far as I can at present understand.

- (1) With regard to your first problem of "Raum-aesthetic" I have not succeeded in "catching on" as yet—I'll try to get the book in which you said you had opened this idea to some extent. Nor have I an reflection, any suggestions to make alter that possibly Haeckel's pro-morphologic (which no one has followed up I fear) and the books of that Edin. Writer "Hay" I think of 40 years ago which I can send you when I go back to Edin. Of perhaps have sent here before—I think you may take it as almost certain that not even these will suit you—but that the field is still untouched by naturalists.
- (2) As to your second problem, that of general biological thought as you are already in touch with the schools of Weismann, of Buffon, of Le Dantec etc.—I want to suggest you looking into the Rivista de Scienza a very good review of synthetic aim—thus the paper of one Russell a pupil of my friend Arthur Thomson, are fantastically clear and illuminating.
- (3) Again the "Aichis F Rassen-und Gesellschaftsbiologie" (though in the earlier vols. too full of pantentonic aspirations to please you or me probably) is also rich in good abstracts of recent evolutionary literature, & from these you will see how new schools are arising out of the increasingly psychological output, a "vitalisms", "psycho-Vitalisms", "psycho-Lamarckisms" & imply.
- (4) Let me make clear what I meant by recommending he outline of my own Principles of Biology: Only that that particular syllabus outlines two volumes, (I) of the main generalization of the science, in their historic origins each _____ thought baring its limitation (e.g. Linne', Defussion, Bichat, and so on & be his precursor & his

continuation also his sub-or competitors? E.g. Curvier applying Sussueus' botany to the animal world.

In this way in an hour or two you can visualize the essential library of a science & then in its main outlines.

My problem (as a generalizing student, half way between this specialists & this philosopher) is to do this for science after science; & though I don't say I've got very far in any save biology. I have satisfied myself of this applicability of the method on other subjects, and thus can learn fairly rapidly in these when I get started at all. I submit then this bookcase method to you & as time-saving especially, as well as clear.

(II) I also want to interest you in the idea that the life process may be worked out (as a "paradigm of life", as I suppose a grammarian might call it) from the simple triad of organism, fn. & Evol. up with refined developments, which appear to me ____ I have deceived myself. To throw new light upon the highest connections—e.g. the Gods, the Muses, the Furies etc. & other great concepts of the past—in short on the mythic and poetic presentments of evol. in mind & society—This does I think incidentally throw light upon aesthetics, my aesthetics (so far as I have any, which you may naturally doubt) also involves an appreciation of the way in which environment is modified by us. —In short the culmination of our life is art=& art is life expression in its more adequate forms at least.

Connected with all this ____ is my method of graphic expression. I submit that if when any one gives me the amount of time which is necessary to learn the moves of any game, this "game of life" appears upon its chequer-boards with a new lucidity—you could not see this from my dry syllabus, but I'd hope to make this clear when you came into my diagram workshop, or synthetic ~~laboratory~~ study & drawing office. Do you appreciate maps, geologic sections, historic charts? Or globes, relief models? Or the keyboard or stops of an organ? I want you to begin with whichever is least uncongenial to you & I should like to try whether I cannot in an hour or two give you such keys and mortekeys as I possess, to the world of biology at any rate.

Yours faithfully

(Till Thurs 4pm here)

P Geddes

Patrick Geddes, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives.
July 14, 1910.

University Hall, Chelsea
More's Garden,
Cheyne Walk.
14/7/10

Dear Vernon Lee

Though Miss Paget & I had all sorts of difficulty in understanding one another's vocabulary & way of using it, and spent so much discussion on our respective approaches & side interests that we did not get to our destinations _____, I have just had a most satisfactory morning's truancy from work to read your volume, into which I have now got more than halfway, and see more or less to the end, and all this without a word of cavil, indeed with warm agreement. —I tried with understanding, & certainly with help & edification, with encouragement & impulse.

I now see that the aesthetic doctrine which so puzzled me in our conversations is not your main doctrine as I feared, but is simply a point of view, a new suggestion & avenue of research, no doubt as legitimate as another, and not that sternly scientific dissolution of everything I can fit into diagrams (!) a reduction of beauty to a department of plane geometry, with at best a hope of its rising into solid.

Now just as I failed to catch on to triangular or other diagrams, so I worried her into a corresponding feeling that my squared diagrams were patterns for oil clots & what not. But you know lots of diagrams eg. That (cross block) is not simply patterns or a degenerate swastika, but the actual plan of a Greek church, and that with a longer west arm (church shape) it becomes a Latin one. Further that it is not until you have settled on me plan or other that you can safely begin to build (witness the confusion of these at St. Peter's) Hence I try a new task also—Well I am not a writer, when I can possibly help it, but a builder & garden maker & my diagrams are not simply abstract symbols, but plans in process towards perfection. That is how a Bauer, in both senses in town & country, must think & work. Words which are most people's direct expression, give unsatisfactorily indirect expression of his meaning & his practical purpose. Hence [diagrams].

Next I find that this is not enough beyond university & collegiate residence we need something more & to plan this, in all ways, is my problem. The school (the University of London is but a big school) is not enough: Its only factual learning had to

be re-mediated into ideas organized into synthesis. So the art school & museum with their copying of nature & examples have to be vitalized with food & impulse to the imagination & so on. This means however something more than the laboratory & study of our new students. It means a cell & meditation, a cloister of collective life; and here I want you to look into the actual crypt or basement of Crosby Hall (with its queer plan & tell me what you think of its adaptiveness to this deeper culture than the student usually gets & knows.¹⁶

Next, I want you to come with me upstairs into the Hall itself (drawing) and see how it should be decorated—with fitting symbol; and how the various exhibitions & functions, civic, historic &c which have to plan for next winter appeal to you.

Furthermore upstairs in this Hall itself is the Music Galley (drawing) What will you say to our ideas about the use and meaning of that? Finally this has to open into the library, not yet built—yet begun. Not an ordinary library (this is beyond our means & beneath our aim in a way) but a small special library of literature, distinctively utopian, in the best sense (utopian & other) of that often ill-used word. (e.g. including *Laurus Nobilis*)

Now think of these four storeys as in vertical section, one above the other:

[Illustration, see Figure 3.]

First thought, Secondly deed therefrom. Thirdly, beyond the deed the higher dream-of music. Fourthly, beyond this even the accumulated imagination of all the noblest hope & thought, however as yet unrealisable.

Therefore back to everyday study & dining room again. You will say you understand all this better in words than in my rude sketch. Yes: but I have the actual task of building and realizing these things, & that is my art, and for it I have sacrificed as yet any ambitions I may have possessed as a writer. Hence I am anxious that you understand this place and any problems in it, not as a reduction of vivid phrase like “becoming, being: realising, Idealising” into a mere diagram; but as another confession of this moving thought & theory & the universe & life which we completely share—an expression of it in definite educational & public form, of town & gown, college & borough, university & city.

In the above I am supplying my life theory & _____ schemata, & seeking to _____ my more general world of interiority—yours in *Laurus Nobilis*, mine in the rebuilt Hall (Which I’d like to see graced by your Laurel accordingly).

¹⁶ Built in 1466 in Bishopsgate, London, but was moved in 1910 to Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.

Yours very cordially

P Geddes

Just in case you should be free & idle tomorrow, will you phone me in study (Kensington 4118 rather than at the top of the sheet) in forenoon saying if you can come to tea (this time in Crosby Hall whence we might still go to garden if you wish)—or to dinner then I'd like to introduce you to friend Mrs Taylor whose (Rose & Vine) poetry I told you of as loving.¹⁷

Patrick Geddes, o Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives.
October 27, 1911.

Geddes and Colleagues
Outlook Tower Edinburgh
27/10/1911

Dear Miss Paget,

Thanks for your encouragement though too generous a letter! Yes, I got Dr. Semon's Mneme, and plunged into it one evening with avidity. But a mass of _____ cases, the most serious & difficult I have ever had to plough through, came in the way, & I have ever since been engaged in a very difficult line of work and correspondence, which will take me another fortnight or more to see through, here & in London; while after that I have a delayed book to finish for which editor & publishers are faithfully clamouring. I thus won't get back to biology (say bio-psychology rather, or better still psycho-biology!) till December, and if I can then write with any _____ & _____ to you & to Dr. Semon I will: meantime, I can only send to you this mere acknowledgement, & the same to him, or indeed still less.

I wonder if I ever sent or gave you my last syllabus of biology lectures? If you can read Semon with such ease and pleasure you will easily get through the superficial difficulty & unfamiliarity of my idiom and method.

Sip, or at least skim lightly through the first-half, really a book by itself, on the history of biology, & come with fact to the interpretation of life. If I may magnify my own office, it seems to me that I am expressing on the one side, though in a different

¹⁷ Rachel Annand Taylor, *Rose and Vine*.

way, the main theme of Dr. Semon, & on the other that of Bergson, but I doubt whether the over-compression of the syllabus may leave this intelligible.

So I turn to another matter. That of the outlook Tower. In the midst of all this I have had repeated visits from one of the brightest & keenest of American ____ presidents, a great personage in his own country, & he insists that I go off again next year on a lecturing tour, & to the vivacious and adventurous western group of universities to which especially belongs rather than to the colder & more European Eastern ones I know already. But I am no longer content to simply lecture; I want to realize my tower as the needed synthetic institute of this & that university—as a means of illuminating the inter-relation of studies at present chopped up among separate chairs & even separate faculties, and so made into specialisms, recondite, esoteric almost, too often arrested, static, & needing infinite “research” to discover their true bearings or even to vitalize them in any way: whereas, where life is brought into the midst of them, their unity reappears.

Hence I think you may be interested in reading the accompanying enormous letter, which I send by separate post with the syllabus. And if you can suggest any one to any one who you think such ideas appear let me know & I’ll send them something & may print—some day!

But when you saw the aim of the town through its present dilapidation, dismantlement, confusion, incompleteness, you will pardon my wishing to tell you more fully of its layer aims.

With best wishes for your own work—which I always read with interest, pleasure, ____ & substantial agreement, believe me,

P. Geddes

Alas, “snowed under” among the cases I spoke of (for a time got over) But I’ll have to put off ____ Dr. Semon till summer term. I had a good talk with Bergson in Paris the other day and found him ready for the life-notations I urge on you.

The long letter referred to I cannot find & my husband has gone away for two or three days so I must send this and the syllabus meanwhile. Cordial greetings Anna Geddes.

Richard Semon (München, Germany), to Vernon Lee (Florence, Italy).
Somerville Archives.
? 13, 1912.

Martuis-Strasse 7

München

Sehr verehrte Miss Paget.

Ich Komme heute uns eine grossen Bitte zu Ihnen. Wie sie wohl wissen hatte ich die Hoffnung auf eine übersebzung der "Mneme" ins englische vorläufig ganz aufgegeben. Im Laufe dieses Sommers wurde im nun durch folgende Nachricht sehr überrascht. Bei Manchester lebt ein Deutscher, Chef einer grösseren Firma, schon seit vielen Jahrzehnten in England ansässig namens Louis Simon. (Wie schon die Orthographie des Namens Simon zeigt, mit mir nicht etwa verwanut). Wie ich schon ans den Briefen dieses Herrn wusste, ist er seit langem ein begeisterter Freund der "mneme", und zwar einer, der das Buch wirklich verstanden hat und überhaupt über biologische kenntnisse verfügt, wie die bei einem Nou-Professional ganz ungewöhnlich Herr und sich nur aus einer viele Jahre lang gepflegten Liebhaberin erklären. Dieser Mann (der schon seit langer zeit unglücklich darüber ist, dass die "mneme" nicht in englischer sprache erscheinen und deshalb in England und Amerika so gut wie unbekannt ist), hat sich nun ganz plötzlich und ohne meine zutun entschlossen, sich om die übersetzung zu wagen und hat im Laufe du letzern 5 monate bereits 1/3 desselben im rohen Entwurf übersetzt. Die ersten beiden Kapitel (das zweite nur zur Hälfte) hat er dann noch etwas durchgearbeitet und mir diese Durcharbeitung zur durchsicht zugeschickt. Ich soll Kontrollieren 1) ob der sinn überall zichtig erfasst und wiedergegeben ist und 2) die Terminologie Kontrollieren (Letzteres habe im noch nicht geben Kann es aber leicht marken, weil es; wie ich in Erfahrung gebracht habe, ein German-English Dictionary of terms used in medicine am the Allied Scrivener giebt, das ich mir anschaffen will).

Ich habe bisher nun das 1. Kapitel auf die Wiedergabe es siens durchgenommen und bin in dieser Beziehung (bis auf eine Stelle p. 4, wo ich eine langere veränderung für den übersetzer eingeklebt habe) durchaus zufrieden.

Was nun den Stil anlangt, so soll mach meiner (den stil wicht betressenden) durchsicht ein Freund des übersetzers, ein englischer 'deisteirher'(natürlich geborener Engländer), der auch Psychologie studiert hat und sich für meine Werke interessiert die übersetzung in hinblick auf den englischen ausdruck durchnehmen und den Stil noch flüssiger im Machen suchen.

Hier komme ich num der zu dem Punkt, über den ich Ihren Rat erbeitten wollte: ist der stil der übersetzung ein solcher, dass er durch Leichte Äußerungen du einem die

Leser befriedigenden gemacht werden Kann, oder muss das Ganze in dieser Richtung noch einmal von grund aus umgearbeitet werden?! Bitte sehen sie das erste Kapitel von diesem 'Gesultspunkt' aus einmal näher an. Die lektüre der "Mneme" ist schon an sich im deutschen Original für den, der das Deutsche vollständig beherrscht, ein hartes Stück arbeit. In einer das sprachgefühl beleidigenden übersetzung win die Lektüre den Lesern auf die Nerven gehen, wird sie abstoßen, und die allgemeine Meinung wird dahin gehen, dies sei einfach ein unmögliches Buch. Wenn diese Gefahr vorliegt, will im auf eine englische übersetzung lieber verlaufig oder in alle Schigkeit verzorhten. Bitte zeigen Sie mir ganz ungeschminkt Ihre Meinung. Sie leisten mir damit einen grossen Freundschaftsdienst. Noch ist es zeit, den so opferwilligen übersetzer und mich vor eine selbsttäuschung zu bewahren. Noch ist es Zeit den so opferwilligen übersetzer und mich vor einer selbsttäuschung zu bewahren, die sich vielleicht sparen schwer zahlen wurde. Noch eine speziellere Bemerkungen. Das erste Kapitel der "mneme" ist inhaltlich und formell eines der schwierigsten der ganzen Buches: Ist die übersetzung dieses Kapitels ertraglich, so hat das übrige keine erustren Bedenken. Die verbesserungen und roter Tinte in der maschinenschrift rühren von selbst übersetzer der. Die Bemerkungen und schwarzer Tinte am Rande so wie das angeklebte Stück auf p. 4 stammen von mir und sind für den übersetzer bestimmt.

Verzeihen sie dass ich Ihnen diese Arbeit Aufbürden. Vielen herzbren dank im voraus: Mit den besten Grüssen von meiner frau und mir für sie und Mrs. Forbes-Mosse, die nun wohl auch schon wieder in Florenz ist, Ihr verehringsroller.

Richard Semon

1) Ich meine damit natürlsm nur Durchsicht und jufachten über die Branchbarkeit, nicht etwa positive verbesserungen.

p.s. Ich schreib vor etwa 4 monaten an signor Calderoni und bat ihn um eine Aus Kunst. Ich erhielt aber niemals eine Antwort.

My translation:

Martius-Strasse 7
München

Dear Miss Paget.

I am coming to you today with a big request. As you probably know, I had given up hope for an overseas translation of the "Mneme" into English for the time being. Over the course of this summer I was very surprised by the following news. Near Manchester lives a German, boss of a large company, settled for many decades in England, called Louis Simon. (As the spelling of the name Simon shows, I'm not too confused). As I already knew from the letters of this gentleman, he has long been an avid friend of the "mneme", one who has truly understood the book and who has biological knowledge at all, such as the gentleman and unusual non-professional explain of themselves, only after a long-time cultivating their love. This Man (who has been unhappy for a long time about the fact that the *Mneme* does not appear in English and is therefore almost unknown in England and America), all of a sudden, with no intention of doing so, decided to take on the translation, and in the last 5 months he has already translated 1/3 of it in the rough draft. He then worked through the first two chapters (the second half only) and sent me this draft for review. I should like to control 1) whether the meaning is everywhere properly recorded and reproduced and 2) to control the terminology (The latter I have not yet been able to give it, but can easily mark it because I have learned that there is a German-English Dictionary of terms used in medicine on the Allied Scrivener, that I can get on with).

So far, I have gone through the first chapter on the reproduction of it, and in this respect (except for a passage on page 4, where I have pasted in a long change for the translator), I am quite satisfied.

As far as the style is concerned, to make myself transparent (the style of the subject) a friend of the translator, an English 'deisteirher' (natural born Englishman), who has also studied psychology and is interested in my works, would look at the translation in view of the English expression and make the style even more fluid in the making.

Here I come to the point where I wanted to get your advice: Is the style of translation such that it can be made by gentle utterances that attempts to satisfy the reader, or does the whole thing have to be reworked from scratch in that direction?!

Please take a closer look at the first chapter from this topic. The reading 'The Mneme' is in itself in the German original a hard piece of work for one who has completely mastered the German language. If it is an impertinent translation of the language, the text will annoy its readers, it will repel them, and the general opinion will be that this is simply an impossible book. If this danger exists, I want to be more or less correct in the

English translation. Please let me know your opinion quite unembellished. You're doing me a great friendship. It is to save since the self-sacrificing translator and me from a self-deception, which would perhaps be hard to take. One more special remark. The first chapter of the 'mneme' is one of the most difficult of the whole book in terms of content and form: if the translation of this chapter is profitable, the rest will have no serious reservations. The improvements and red ink in the typewriter are from the translator itself. The remarks and black ink on the edge as the stuck piece on p. 4 come from me and are intended for the translator. Forgive me for putting this work to you. Thank you very much in advance: With the best greetings from my wife and me for her and Mrs. Forbes-Mosse, who is now probably back in Florence, your worshipper.

Richard Semon

- 1) Naturally, I'm only looking through and jockeying about the workability, not positive improvements.

P.S. I wrote to signor Calderoni about 4 months ago and asked him for an art degree. But I never got an answer.

Bella Duffy, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives. (
February 13, 1922.

36 Fitzjames Square

W 14

Dearest Vernon,

The next time you write, whether a p. c. or more, do remember to tell me the title of B. Russell's work in wh. he mentions Semon.¹⁸

As regards Rambaud I quite see the force of your criticism.¹⁹ As Lord Bacon said of the credulous who accepted he "counts the hits and not the misses."

But do you not also think that meets must necessarily tell less about evolution, adaption & so on, than the long lived, complex & bigger creatures? Insects, urged by the necessity of depositing eggs (for the males usually die after copulation, don't they?) before their brief life is ended might easily, one can imagine, put up with makeshifts which wd.

¹⁸ Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (1921)

¹⁹ A. Rambaud & Charles Renault, *Origine et développement des os* (1864) translated as *The Origin and Development of Bones*.

expose the bigger creatures to insupportable conditions? Adaption for a creature evolving into an elephant, we will say, must surely have been a very laborious process—And there seem to be such very eccentric forces among insects (such as the mantis). These might easily be mere accidents than protective adaptations—altho’ resulting in protection and preservation “unbeknownst”. What do you think?

I am doing Semon.

My “chariot of fire” as Blake wd have envisaged it is not yet quite ready, I expect to see its blessed form not later than next week.

I have just got your card. Ellen has insisted on searching day after day for the pince-nez, tho’ I kept telling her I had others & that anyhow it wd turn up one day; but I did not expect it to turn up at San Gervasio. Please send it as you suggest by hand—no hurry.

I am indeed sorry to hear about your gardener’s wife—so sad for her & such a worry for you. I had begun this before your card arrived for I wd not have begun about meats—especially as I had nothing valuable to say.

It is very kind of you to be interested in my miraculous chair—I knew you wd. be.

Yours ever after,

B. D.

Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee.

Somerville Archives.

Undated.

Dearest Vernon,

I suppose you will immediately notice in R’s latest article his allusion to Semon whose works now seem to be attracting great attention. Of course R having set out to deny “adaption” _____ at S.

B. Russell is more respectful but I suppose you have seen his remarks. He dismissed Haldane Derogratias! By the way, don’t you think it is time to talk about separate “faculties” of the mind? The “faculty” of imagination for instance? I shd suppose that imagination must be the product of a large number of responses to stimuli?

“The World’s great age begins anew”, “The Golden Years Return” etc., etc.! Consider the immense chain of associations that leapt to life in that—and the quality of a poem must depend on the richness of associative ideas embodied in it—“The World’s Great Age” is, as to speak, a vision. “Tam O’Shanter” is an image but the content of both is rich in experience, of books in, the one case, of low life in the other. Shelley recalled & reproduced what he had read—Burns recalled & reproduced what he had seen. Another man would remember the speculations of Plato & other metaphysicians, and another would remember a Village Kermesse, but their power of reproducing the dream or the scene would depend on the number of live engrams in their brain? What do you think? I suppose real education ought to be based upon keeping alive as many associations of ideas as possible, but not too many associations of words. Shibboleth means the negation of thought: that is a truism. Religious teaching blocks thought because it inculcates the acceptance of formulas, another truism. Similarly with accepted political theories, as distinct from political practice. That is why the best politicians are “opportunists” & the worst are fanatics.

Don’t you think that if the physico-chemical basis of thought becomes generally accepted that there will come about a great decline in speculative thought & original discovery& thus a great diminution of genius as distinct from persons of mere talent? In science of course there must always be working hypothesis, like Darwin’s or Newton’s or Einstein’s & the man who starts a new viable hypothesis will, if the hypothesis covers much ground, be so far a genius, but original discoveries and original conception will become more & more difficult to make as they will be checked & criticized at every turn by other people’s discoveries & conceptions? It was a greater effort of original genius to imagine the first steam-engines than to imagine the first airplane. So Plato & later philosophers were able to evolve all sorts of wonderful speculation because there was no science to check them, but mankind in future will surely cease to bother about the universal soul, and the vision of a great mystic must lose in value as a “revelation” when the mutual process which produced it is understood? Already we are very skeptical of “golden years” returning—people here, especially women, (but perhaps only because women are more numerous in society than men) have gone crazy over Cone’ & the amusing thing is that they all seem to think the world is going to be a quite different place when everybody is potentially a miracle worker.

Humanity has a new value which is somehow to disclose new vistas of mystical experience. Cone’ must be much astonished at this application of his curative theories—

in which there is nothing new, although he, personally, is said to possess much “magnetism”.

I don't know why I have wandered off into all these rather obvious remarks for my purpose of setting down to write to you was quite different. I wanted to tell you that it is generally not possible to quote Simon's translation as he has shortened Semon's remarks & apparently has often merged two or three sentences into one. As he “enjoyed” the constant advice of the distinguished author I suppose this was a quite justifiable process, but it makes searching for quotable passages very troublesome & often quite futile—what a pity Semon despaired and died. I see a third posthumous work of his has been published but I don't know if it concerns heredity & it wd have been so interesting to know his views about that. Which is the most important—inherited or acquired engram stores? That is the crux, isn't it?

B. D

Bella Duffy, to Vernon Lee.
Somerville Archives.
November 23, 1922.

36, Fitz James Avenue
W. 14.

Dearest Vernon

I am sorry you had to pay on the p.c. These stylish stamps may be useful for making up small sums or cheques or orders. It is dreadful for people to underpay their letters. I expect the fault was mine. I was probably wool gathering after the manner of the aged.

Morel got in for Dundee. He and Scryngeour a (solitary)prohibitionist (!) Defeated Winston. Possibly “Konradine's” husband was defeated by some thousands of votes. Of course, Labour has done very well, better than was expected. But if Lloyd George & his merry men (only 47) choose to vote with B. L. against Asquithians & Labour he may keep the foot in for four or five years—the majority being 75 without him—Personally I am inclined to think Bonar will not be long in power. The L. G. debacle is really remarkable—it is a case of “roses, roses, all the way” & now the indispensable is found to be just an embarrassing “remainder”.

Was it Christ who talked of the silken purse and the sow's ear? I always thought it was Henry Viii!! But perhaps it was neither.

B. R. was heavily defeated in Chelsea, in spite of alluring posters presenting Mrs. B. R. with the baby who is heir to the title. I should not think he expected to get in in such a “residential” quarter. All lodging houses when not shops and aristocratic flats. The “Capital Levy” scared all the old women (spinsters, widows & retired officers) in Chelsea, Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington & in fact in most parts of inner London. I think it is an unfortunate term as all it really amounts to is the paying off our debt in one swoop instead of by prolonged tinkering--& capital is a thing being constantly renewed. But the “old women” persist in regarding it as a kind of cave of Aladdin wh. once raided must remain forever empty.

I have communicated your views e.g. index politely to J. L.

I always meant to translate Semon’s own sachregister—as an index to the translation. I do not think Mussolini is getting a very “good press”. One paper described him as a mixture of “hard tacks” (an Americanism I presume for Gradgrindery) and Bon Scout! Which did not sound respectful.

Do suggest something for me to do, dear Vernon. I am out of a job & so bored.

I am reading Wildon Carr on Croce.²⁰ I think I have no brains for philosophy.

You are likely to be invaded by many passers through. Everybody is rushing to Italy (when not to Germany) to make money out of the exchanges.

With love,

Thine,

B.

²⁰ Herbert Wildon Carr (1857-1931) possibly *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* (London: MacMillan, 1917)

The Psychological Microtome

It is a year or so already since noticing how my thoughts seemed to converge towards some sort of psychological Weltanschauung, I wrote a note lamenting our lack of psychological instrument fine enough to bring the ego and its correlated otherness within our ken. Now, in Maria Waser's life of Monakow I find the name of the instrument whereof I want the psychic equivalent: it is the Microtome. And I remember Semon showing me, that last time of meeting before the War, if not the instrument itself, about which I am not sure, at least its result: a fish sliced microscopically and set between slides of glass is that you could see its minutest tissues in separate sections which put together presented the whole fish intact. The Microtome!

And now while reading the Monakow book, with the thought of my psychological cosmogony or philosophy running in my head, there has come the vague knowledge of my having employed and employing, an instrument of this kind. Also the vague knowledge already of some years' standing, that I had approached these subjects through my aesthetics. And thinking further of when and how I did so, it becomes obvious that my microtome, my first rough & ready psychological slicer, were my gallery-diaries in which (neglecting any kunstforshung) I sliced the concrete work of art into how it made me feel, and thus got a series (like those of Semon's fish) of separate real moods and mood-concomitants, often very dissimilar but making up my total experience of a particular work of art.

Then, of course, came my Questionnaires, let alone the analyses in my Handling of Words. All of which amounted to such microtoming, slicing and isolating the piece of

music or the page of literature into the different responses of the various Venuchspersonen and of myself.

With the almost unnoticed growth in my mind of the notion of response, of reaction, as at the bottom of all psychic phenomena. For all of which I had been prepared by Semon's Mneme, his theories of the akoluth, of ekphory, etc. And working on my questionnaires and applying H. Head's theory of the proto-pathic and epicritic mental processes, I came to recognise that which we call the outer world is largely the coordinated reactions between our sensory (including mnemic) impressions and our present, or habitual cenesthesia.

And I think such an analytical Weltanschauung, thus obtained by use of my psychological microtome, can yield a morale sans dieu!

P. S. I suppose I have been more influenced than I think or like, by the Freudians, their influence marked by my dislike of the sexual (and excrementital!) Kram and by their mythology of a psychic Hades, etc., founded upon the witch finder's methods of ingenuity. But there is more than a difference, there is an opposition between what they call analysis, which is, I think, merely digging into their patient's lapsed biography, and my attempt to isolate and compare the more elementary items of consciousness.

Nov 22. Dec 12.

The Psychologist's Microtome

Thanks in part I suppose, to St. Paul or his predecessors, sex has been the moralist's special bête noir, hence banned from articulate, at least respectable, speech, with the result of being nowadays discovered whence the inarticulate (the Freudian Unconscious) has been stirred. Hence, now that such stirring has set in, it has become the explanation of all things, the underlying spring of all thought and action, as vide Ernest Jones.

But when the conspiracy of silence shall have been forgotten and this item of sex become familiarly recognised and its importance taken for granted, shall we not discover something different beneath it and beneath all else? Something once oppressed not because banned or unspoken, but unrecognised because its recognition requires psychological instruments hitherto unused, equivalent for mental science to that microscopic slicer which I was once shown by Semon. A psychological microtome enabling us to separate the layers of concrete thought & feeling and to lay bare the essential constitution and see the wholes into which they unite? Not merely the stuff of brain and nerves, but rather the organic motions constituting life?

Jan 28, 1932

Written & improved March 15, 1934.

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